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THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE.
WHEREIN THE
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
OF
CHRISTIAN DUTY
ARE
ASSIGNED, EXPLAINED, *and* PROVED.

V O L. II.

By *J O H N S C O T T*, D. D.
Rector of *St. Peter Poor*, L O N D O N.

The TWELFTH EDITION, Corrected.

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CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Worship of God and the Holy Trinity
in the Holy Spirit
and in the Unity of the Holy Trinity

THE HOLY TRINITY

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THE HOLY TRINITY

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
AND

Right Reverend FATHER in G^d

H E N R Y

Lord Bishop of *London*,

And one of His Majesty's Most Honourable
Privy, Council, &c.

My Lord,

I Here present to your Lordship
the *first* Volume of a *second*
Part of that Treatise of *Christian*
Life, which I published some
Years since, and which under the
Protection of your *Venerable*
Name hath found good accept-
ance with the World; and to
make an ingenuous Confession to

A 2

your

The Epistle Dedicatory.

your Lordship, my design in this *second* Dedication is not *purely* to render you the due Respects of a *Presbyter* to his *Diocesan*; not to tender those *just* Acknowledgments I owe to your Lordship for the Happiness I have enjoyed, with the rest of your Clergy, under the *auspicious* Influence of your *serene* and *watchful* Government; no nor yet to express the *grateful* Sense I have, and shall always retain, of the *personal* Obligations you have laid upon me; no, my Lord, though *these* were all of them sufficient Inducements, yet I confess that together *with* these I had a certain *Politick* end in my Eye. For I thank God I can truly say, my *main* Design in composing this Treatise

was

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was to *benefit* the World ; but reflecting upon the manifold *Defects* it abounds with after all the *Pains* I had bestowed upon it, I found that, to palliate its *internal* Blemishes, it was but needful to grace it with some *external* Ornament, and could think of none so proper for my Purpose as this of affixing your Lordship's *Name* to it ; a Name that carries with it Power enough to recommend any thing to the World that is but *pious*, and *honest* and *well-designed*, and all *that*, I am sure, *this* is, *how* defective soever it be in *other* respects ; which together with the Experience I have had of the great *candor* and *benignity* of your Lordship's Temper, give me Encouragement to hope that

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you will not only *accept* but *approve* it; and then I am sure your Lordship's Approbation will give it *Credit* and *Authority* enough with the World to enable it to effect those *good* and *honest* Ends for which it was sincerely intended, *by*

Your Lordship's

Most Humble,

Most Obliged, and

Faithful Servant,

John Scott.

T H E
P R E F A C E
T O T H E
R E A D E R.

WHEN I wrote the Treatise of *Christian Life*, of which *this* and *another* Volume, now in the Press, is a *second* Part, I had no design of engaging any further in that Argument; but *now* I find by Experience, that *Writing* is like *Building*, wherein the Undertaker, to supply some *Defect*, or serve some *Convenience* which at first he *foresaw* not, is usually forced to *exceed* his first *Model* and *Proposal*, and many times to *double* the *Charge* and *Expence* of it. For after that Treatise began to be a little known in the World, I was advised from several Hands that there was one thing *wanting* in it, which is the common *Defect* of most *practical* Treatises, and that was, an *Explication* and *Proof* of those main *Principles* of Religion in which the *Obligation*

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gation of our Christian Duty is *founded*, which they thought might be sufficiently done within a very *narrow* Compass, though herein I find that either they were very much *mistaken*, or that I have very much *exceeded* the necessary Limits of my Argument, which I am not yet convinced of, but *that* I must submit to the Judgment of the World. I confess the Prospect of doing it in that *narrow* Compass *they* talked of was a great Inducement with me to undertake it, and perhaps had I *foreseen* at first what a *large* Field of Discourse it would oblige me to traverse, I should never have *entered* on it; but when once I was *in*, I could not handsomely *retreat*.

And indeed, considering with what prodigious *Rudeness* and *Insolence* the very *Foundations* of Religion are struck at in this *dissolute* Age, he who would *now* treat of them to any purpose will find himself obliged not only to give a distinct and clear *Explication* of them, but also to assert the *Truth* of them with convincing *Evidence*, and to *answer* and *expose* those Atheistical *Cavils* that are levelled

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levelled against them; which *latter* would have been much less necessary in an Age of a more *Serious* and *Religious* Genius. And upon this Account I have been forced upon a much *larger* and more *laborious* Proof of the several *Principles* of Religion than I first intended. Not that I have any great Hope of reclaiming those who are *professed* Atheists to the acknowledgment of the *Truth*; for when Men are *seduced* by *Lust*, as I verily believe most Atheists are, there is little Reason to expect they will be *reduced* by *Reason*. But that which I chiefly aimed at is to *confirm* and *establish* those that are wavering, and to *Antidote* all against this spreading Contagion of *Irreligion* and *Atheism*, which in a fatal Chain draws after it not only the Ruin of Men's Souls *hereafter*, but also the utter Subversion of all Human Society *here*: And it is *this* hath constrained me to enlarge this *second* Part into *two* Volumes, which at first view I promised myself to finish in *one*.

In this *first* Volume I have treated only of *those* Principles which are common
to

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to *natural Religion* and *Christianity* together; as an Introduction to which I have in the *first* Chapter *explained* and *demonstrated* the *natural* Distinction of Human Actions into *good* and *evil*, by some *eternal* Reason *for* or *against* them; and having shewn at large that God hath made this Distinction sufficiently clear and evident to all Men to enable them to conduct themselves to their own *Happiness*, and that those Actions of Men which fall under this *natural* Distinction are the principal Subject Matter of the Commands and Prohibitions of Religion; I proceed in the second Chapter briefly to explain the Nature of Religion in *general*, and of natural and Christian Religion in *particular*: From the Nature of *both* which I have deduced those fundamental Principles from whence the Obligations of Religion are derived; the five first of which being common to *natural Religion* with *Christianity*, I have handled in this first Volume in so many distinct Chapters.

And then as for the *last*, *viz.* the acknowledgment of *Jesus Christ* our
Mediator;

Mediator, which contains under it all those Religious Principles that are peculiar to *Christianity*, though I have endeavoured to treat of it with all the Brevity that is consistent with a clear and satisfactory Account of the whole Argument, yet it is run out into a *second* Volume, which is now in the Press, and, I hope, within a few Weeks will be ready to follow *this*. And perhaps when the Reader considers the *Copiousness* of the Argument it handles, he will rather blame me for being too brief than too tedious; for in treating of those Doctrines which have been handled *at large* in other English Treatises of the Christian Faith, and especially in that incomparable one of our most learned Bishop of *Chester*, on the Creed (a Book which next to the Bible I thankfully acknowledge myself more beholden to for my Instruction in the Doctrines of Religion than to any *one* I ever read) I have contracted myself into as *narrow* a Compass as barely the *necessary* Application of them would permit me; but where that *renowned* Pen hath insisted more *Cursorily* (as for instance on the particular Offices

I

of

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of our blessed *Mediator*) I have most *enlarged* myself, though even *there* I have for brevity sake *pretermitted* some things I intended less *immediate* and *necessary* appertaining to the Argument.

Upon the whole I can truly say, that to the best of my Understanding, I have herein delivered nothing but what is agreeable to the Doctrine of the *Primitive Church*, which as the most *faithful* Comment on the Holy Writings of our Saviour and his Apostles I have all along *carefully* consulted in *doubtful* and *difficult* Cases; and this is the Reason why it hath stuck so long in hand, the Pains I have taken in *consulting* the *antient* Monuments of Christianity about it, being, as I may truly say, at least *double* to that of *composing* it; and in following the *Primitive* Doctrine, I have followed the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, which in its *Faith*, *Government*, and *Discipline*, I believe in my Conscience, is the *most* Primitive Church in the World.

As for the *Method* I have chosen, which is to deduce all the Doctrines of Christianity from one *general* Head, *viz.* the
Doctrine

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Doctrine of the *Mediator*, it is the most *convenient* I could think of for *my* Purpose, which was to represent at once to the Reader's View *all* the Parts of our holy Religion in their natural Connection *with* and Dependance *on* one another, that so he might be the better able to judge of the *beautiful* Contexture and *admirable* Contrivance of the whole, and that by seeing how *regularly* all the Parts of it proceed out of *one* common Principle, and *conspire* in *one* common End, he may be the better satisfied that Christianity is so far from being a Heap of *Incoherencies*, as some have *injuriously* represented it, that considering it merely as an *Hypothesis*, abstracted from all that *external* Evidence that accompanies it, the very *Art* and *Contrivance* of it, the *Proportion*, *Symmetry*, and *Correspondence* of its Parts, their *Subserviency* to each other, and the *Concurrence* and *Tendency* of them all together to the common *Ends* of Religion, are such as do apparently exceed all *human* Invention, and argue it to be the Product of a *divine* Mind. For as he who would form a true *Idea* of the *Beauty* of

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a *Picture*, must not contemplate the Parts of it *separately*, but survey them all *together*, and consider them in their *Proportions*, and *Correspondencies* with each other; so he who would frame a right Notion of Religion must not look upon it as it lies *scattered* and *divided* into *single* Parts and Propositions, but consider them in *Contexture*, and as they are connected all together into one *Body* or *Hypothesis*. For it is in their apt *Junctures*, their mutual *Dependencies* and admirable *CohereNCies* with one another, that the *Beauty* and *Harmony* of the whole consists. And therefore to do *right* to Christianity, and enable the Reader to contemplate it with the greatest *Advantage*, I have endeavoured to represent to him the whole in a *View*, and to give him a Prospect of *all* the Parts of it *together*, in an harmonious *Union* and *Connection* with each other. For I verily believe that the *mean* Opinion which some witty Men have entertained of Christianity, proceeds in a great Measure from their *broken* and *imperfect* Apprehensions of it; they understand it *piece-meal*, and take it asunder
into

into *single* Propositions, which they consider *separately* and *apart* by themselves, without ever putting them together into one *regular* System, and presenting them to their Thoughts in that *orderly* Connection wherein the holy *Oracles* have delivered them to us. For I can scarce imagine how any Man of Sense should contemplate Christianity *all together*, and *thoroughly* consider the *harmonious* Coherence of all its *Parts*, and the *wonderful* Contrivance of the *whole*, without being captivated with the *Beauty* and *Elegancy* of it.

And now I have nothing farther to add concerning this Treatise but only to intreat the Reader not to be too *severe* in the perusal of it. For though as for the *Doctrine* of it, I see no reason at all to *Apolo-*
gize for it, because I am fully persuaded of the *Truth* of it, yet being forced, as I was, to compose it by *snatches*; and in the more *quiet* Intervals of a *busy* and *uneasy* Life, I very much suspect the *Exactness* both of the *Stile* and *Method* of it; and therefore all the Favour I desire is this, that where I have *improperly* or
obscurely

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obscurely expressed myself, I may be construed in the most *favourable* Sense; and that where-ever I may seem to be *confused* or *immethodical*, it may be attributed to those frequent *Interruptions* which the *Disorders* of my *Body* have given to my *Thoughts*. And these are Requests so very *just* and *reasonable*, that I am confident none will be so *peevish* as to deny me, but they who read Books only to *carp* and *find Fault*, and without any design to *Edify* their own Understandings. But I hope the *Reader* will consider that the Argument here treated of is of too *great* Moment to him to be so wretchedly *trifled* with, and that therefore he will not be either so *disingenuous* to me, or *uncharitable* to himself, as to peruse with such a *spiteful* Design that which I *sincerely* intended for his good, and which he, I am sure, if he pleases, may be the *better* for *for ever*.

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	OF

O F T H E

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

V O L. II.

C H A P. I.

*Concerning the Being, and Nature of
Moral Goodness.*

ALL Human Actions are either Necessary, or Sinful, or Indifferent. The *Necessary* are such as are *commanded*, the *Sinful* such as are *forbidden* by God, the *Indifferent* such as are neither commanded nor forbidden, but left entirely free to our Choice and Discretion. Again, the necessary and the sinful Actions are either such as are necessary and sinful *in themselves*, and are commanded and forbidden upon the account of some Good and Evil that is *inseparable* to their Natures; or such as are *indifferent* in their own Natures, as to any good or evil *inherent* in them, but are made necessary or sinful by some *positive* Command or Prohibition superinduced upon them. Of the first sort are those which we call *Moral* Actions; as being the subject matter of the Moral Law, which commands, and forbids nothing but

V O L. II,

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what is *essentially* and *immutably* good and evil : and whilst there was no other Law but this, every Action which did not oblige by some *eternal* Reason, or which is the same, by some *inseparable* good or evil, was left *free* and *indifferent*. But in process of time God superadded to this *Moral* Law a great many *Positive* ones, whereby he obliged Men to do, and forbear fundry of those *indifferent* Things, which were left to their liberty by the Law of *Nature*. For such we call the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Mosaick Law* ; all which were *indifferent* before they were *imposed*, and as soon as ever the *Imposition* was taken off from them, did immediately return to their Primitive *Indifferency* ; so that by the abolition of their *Ceremonial* Law, the *Jews* were restored to all the Liberties of the *Moral* ; excepting only the matter of the two *Sacraments*, and of maintaining a *visible Communion* with the Church, which are determined by positive Laws of Christianity. And of this latter sort of necessary and sinful Actions, are, not only all those indifferent ones which God himself has commanded and forbidden *immediately*, but also all those which he commands and forbids by his *Viceroy*s and *Representatives*, in this World. For whatsoever he hath not commanded or forbidden by *his own immediate* Dictate and Authority, he hath authorized his Vicegerents to command or forbid, as *they* shall judge it most expedient for the Publick. So that when they command what God hath not forbidden, or forbid what he hath not commanded, *their will* is *God's*, who commands us by their Mouths, and stamps their Injunctions with his own Authority.

And

And of this distinction between Actions that are *morally* and *positively* Necessary, the Scripture frequently takes notice, and particularly, *Mich. vi. 6, 7, 8. Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with Burnt Offerings, with Calves of a Year old, &c.* No, these are not the things that will render me acceptable in his Eyes, and procure me a welcome Admission into his Presence; and yet it is certain that these things were then *required* and *commanded*, and therefore were *positively* necessary; but that they were not necessary *in themselves* upon the account of any *intrinsic* Goodness that was in them, is evident from what follows, *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;* as much as if he should have said, the things abovenamed are in their *own* nature indifferent, having neither good nor evil in themselves; and are *made* necessary merely by *positive* Command, upon which account they are insufficient to recommend you to God; but there are other things that carry an *intrinsic* Beauty and Goodness in their Nature, by which they strictly oblige you to embrace and practise them, and do thereupon recommend you by their own *native* Charms, to the Love and Favour of God; and what these good things are he hath sufficiently shewn or discovered to you, *viz. To do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with your God,* which are the main and principal Duties that he *requires* of you. Which plainly implies that there are some Actions which are *morally*, that is, in their own Natures, *eternally* good, and therefore eternally necessary, and some that are necessary only because

for *some* present Reason God Wills and Commands them. For no account can be given why he should be more pleased with *Justice* and *Mercy* and *Humanity*, than with *Sacrifice*, unless we suppose the former to be good, and therefore necessary upon *immutable* Reasons, and upon that account to be immutably pleasing to him; and the latter to be necessary only upon *mutable* Reasons, which therefore were to lose their necessity as soon as those Reasons did alter and cease. For had Sacrifices been good in their *own* Natures, their Goodness had been as *unalterable* as their Nature; whereas, on the contrary we find, that whereas their *Nature* neither is nor can be altered, yet their *Goodness* or *Necessity* is. For as before God adopted them into the Rubrick of Religion by his own positive Institution, they were *indifferent* things; so after this Institution was repealed by a contrary Command, they became *unlawful*. So that it is *now* as Necessary that we should *not* offer them in the Worship of God, as it was *before* that we *should*. And the same may be said of all the other Rites of the *Mosaick* Law, which being in their own Nature indifferent, could no otherwise be converted either into Necessary or Sinful, but by G O D's expresse Command or Prohibition. Whereas *Justice* and *Mercy*, &c. are good in themselves *abstractly* considered from all Will and Command; and are not good merely because they are *Commanded*, but are commanded because they are *good*; because they carry with them such *unalterable* Reasons as do in themselves render the practice of them eternally necessary. For though there be very good reason why Men should not
offer

offer material Sacrifices, notwithstanding they were once enjoined; yet it can *never* be reasonable for them to be *unjust*, or *cruel*, or *proud*, because the contrary Virtues carry such *fixed* and *immutable* Reasons with them as will bind and oblige us to Eternity; infomuch that though we had a Dispensation to be proud under the Broad-Seal of Heaven, yet 'twould still be very *absurd* and *unreasonable* to be so. And as things that are only *positively* necessary or sinful, derive all their necessity and sinfulness from God's *direct* or *express* Command and Prohibition, so they cannot be commanded or forbidden by *Consequence*. For if the Matter of them be *antecedently* Lawful or Indifferent, it must necessarily remain so till it be *directly* commanded or forbidden; there being no other Reason to bound and limit it, but only the Will of the Law-giver in whose disposal it is; and therefore till he *directly* signifies his Will either for or against it, it must remain as it is, *i. e.* *Free* and *Indifferent*. But you will say, Suppose God hath commanded *such* an indifferent thing for *such* a Reason, doth it not thence follow that he thereby commands every *other* indifferent thing that hath the same Reason for it? I answer, No; for if the Reason why he commands it be *necessary* and *eternal*, it is not a thing *indifferent*, but *morally* necessary, and so is every thing else that hath the *same* Reason for it: and consequently the reason of the Law, though it be applied but to one thing, extends to every thing of the same Nature; because in all moral Cases the Reason of the Law is the Law. But if the thing commanded be in itself *indifferent*, the Reason why it is commanded cannot be *ne-*

cessary; and therefore though there be the same *Reason* why another thing of the same Nature should be commanded, yet it doth not necessarily oblige unless it be commanded *actually*; because in such Cases it is not the *Reason* but the *Authority* of the Law that obliges: and therefore where there is only the Reason and not the Law, it lays no obligation to the Conscience.

From the whole therefore it is evident, what is the difference between things that are *positively* and *morally* Necessary and Sinful; which I thought very necessary to explain at large, for the giving a fuller light to the ensuing Discourse; in which I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That there is such an *intrinsic* Goodness in some *Human* Actions, as renders them for ever *necessary* and *obliging* to us.

Secondly, That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those *Human* Actions are, which carry with them this *perpetual* Obligation.

Thirdly, That these Actions which carry with them this perpetual Obligation, are the *main* and *principal* parts of Religion,

S E C T. I.

That there is such an Intrinſick Good in ſome Human Actions as render them for ever neceſſary and obliging to us.

GOOD is two-fold, *Absolute*, or *Respective*, or the Good of the *End* and the Good of the *Means*. The good of the End is that which is the Perfection and Happineſs of any Being ; the good of the Means is that which tends and conduces thereto. As for inſtance, the *absolute* Good of a Brute Animal conſiſts in the Perfection and Satisfaction of its Senſe, or in having perfect Feeling and Senſation of ſuch things as are moſt grateful to its Appetite and Senſes. Its *reſpective* good is the Means by which its Senſes are perfected or rendered lively and vigorous, and by which it's provided for with ſuch things as are grateful and pleaſing to them. For there being in every *animate* Nature a Principle whereby it's neceſſarily inclined to promote its own Preſervation and well-being, that which hath in it a fitneſs to promote this End is called *Good*, as on the contrary that which is apt to hinder it *Evil*. Now Man being not only a *ſenſitive* but a *rational* Creature, hath a two-fold Good belonging to his Nature, the firſt *Senſitive*, which is the ſame with that of brute Animals, conſiſting in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his bodily Senſes and Appetites, and in thoſe means which conduce thereunto ; and this for diſtinction ſake is called his *Natural*

Good; the second Rational, which consists in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his Rational Faculties, and in those means which tend thereunto; and this is stiled his *Moral Good*, though in reality 'tis as much *Natural* as the former. For Man being naturally as well Rational as Sensitive, that which promotes his Rational Perfection and Happiness, is no less *naturally* good for him than that which promotes his Sensitive: Nay his Rational Nature being the much more *noble* and *excellent* Part of him, that which naturally promotes the Perfection and Happiness of it, is in itself a much *greater* good to his Nature, and ought to be preferred by him before any of those Natural Goods, which conduce only to the happiness of his sensitive Nature; and he who indulges his *sensitive* Part in any Pleasure which his Rational disallows, doth thereby create a Torment to himself, and raise a Devil in his own Mind. For though Reason and Religion doth allow that the sensitive Nature should be gratified in all its natural Appetites and Desires, yet neither allow that it should be pampered and indulged in any such Excesses as are prejudicial either to itself or to that Rational Nature whereunto it is joined; and he who indulges his Sense in any such Excesses, renders himself obnoxious to his own Reason, and to gratify the *Brute* in him displeases the *Man*, and sets his two Natures at variance. So that there is nothing can be *naturally* good for us, that is any way inconsistent with what is *morally* so, *i. e.* with what conduces to the Perfection and Happiness of our rational Nature; and though this natural and moral Good are no way inconsistent with one another, yet it

is

is the Moral that is the Supreme Good of a Man, because it is the Good of his most excellent Nature. Having thus premised what I mean by *Good* in general, and particularly by *Moral Good*, I proceed to shew that in some Human Actions there is such an *intrinsick moral* Good as renders them for ever obliging to us. And this I shall endeavour in these following Propositions.

First, That the Happiness of Human Nature is founded in his *Perfection*.

Secondly, That the Perfection of Human Nature consists in acting suitably to the most *perfect Reason*.

Thirdly, That the most perfect Reason is that wherein all reasonable Beings do *consent* and *agree*.

Fourthly, That there are certain Rules of Moral Good, wherein all Reasonable Beings are *agreed*.

Fifthly, That to act suitably to those Rules hath been always found by universal Experience *condu-cible* to the Happiness of Human Nature, and the contrary *mischievous* thereunto.

I. That the Happiness of Human Nature, is founded in its *Perfection*. For the Perfection of Beings consists in their being *compleatly* disposed and adapted for the End whereunto they are designed. Now the End of all Beings that have Life and Sense, is that sort of Happiness that is suitable to their Natures; for 'tis thither that they all of them naturally tend, and therein that their Faculties do all concenter. When therefore their Faculties or Powers of Action are compleatly disposed to enjoy the proper Happiness of their Na-
tures,

tures, then are they perfect in their Kind. Thus for instance, the End of Brutes which have only bodily Sense, is *sensitive* and *corporeal* Happiness; and therefore then is the Brute Creature perfect in its kind, when it hath not only all the Parts and Senses that are necessary to procure and enjoy its Happiness, but hath them also *perfectly* fitted, tempered, and qualified to pursue and relish it. And supposing that all the Pleasure or Happiness of a Beast consisted in the Taste and Smell of its Pasture, it could never be compleatly happy so long as the Organs of its Smell or Taste were imperfect. So that the Perfection of every Sensible Nature consists in being perfectly disposed to enjoy its natural Happiness. And accordingly herein consists the Perfection of Human Nature, in being perfectly fitted and disposed to enjoy and relish Human Happiness. For this being its proper End, it is impossible it should ever be perfect in its Kind till 'tis compleatly contempered and adapted thereunto. So that our Happiness must necessarily be founded in our *Perfection*, which is nothing else but the perfect Disposition of our Natures to relish and enjoy those Goods wherein the Happiness of our Nature consists; and till our Nature is perfectly disposed to enjoy them, all the good things of Heaven and Earth will be insufficient to render us perfectly happy.

II. That the Perfection of Human Nature consists in acting suitably to the most *Perfect Reason*. For Reason being the Top and Crown of Human Nature, hath a natural Right to *Command* and *Dispose* of its Motions; to be the Eye of its Will, and the Guide of its Affections, and the

Law

Law of all its Powers of Action. And indeed, for what other use serves the Reason of a Man, but to prescribe Rules to his unreasonable Affections, to *light* and *direct* them in their proper Objects, and as they are moving towards them, to *moderate* their Excesses and to *quicken* their Defects, and to lead them on to true Happiness in an even Course through all the wild Mazes of popular Mistake? And unless it be thus employed, the Man is Reasonable *in vain*, and his Light, like a Candle inclosed in a Dark-Lanthorn, burns out in waste and spends itself in an uselefs and unprofitable Blaze. And whilst to please our Appetites and Passions we run counter to the advice of our Reason, we forsake the Rule of our Natures and act like Beasts and not like Men; in which course of Action if we persist, we must necessarily *degenerate* from ourselves, and *sink* by degrees into the most sordid Brutality. For when once our Appetites have gotten the Command of our Reason, and not only *dethroned* but *enslaved* it, the very Order of our Nature is *transported* and we are become our own *Reverse* and *Antipodes*. If therefore we would arrive at our own Perfection, it must be by following our Reason, and submitting all our Affections and Appetites to its Government. For what else can be the Perfection of a Rational Nature, but to be perfectly Rational; and what is it to be perfectly Rational, but to have our Minds thoroughly *instructed* with the Principles of Right Reason, and our Will and Affections intirely *regulated* by them? For herein consists the Supreme Perfection not only of Men, but of Angels, yea and of God himself, the

Crown and Glory of whose Nature it is, that he always *knows*, and *chuses* and *acts* what is *fittest* and *best* and *most reasonable*. And when once our Understanding is so far *enlightned* as that it always *dictates* right Reason to us; and our Will and Affections are so far *subdued* as that they always freely and chearfully *comply* with it, we have arrived to the very top of our Nature, and are commenced perfect Men in Christ Jesus.

III. That the most perfect Reason is that wherein all Reasonable Beings do *consent* and *agree*. For if there be any such matter as *True* and *False*, *Reasonable* and *Unreasonable*, in the Nature of Things, and if there be any such thing as *Understanding* among Beings, whereby they are capable of distinguishing between the *one* and the *other*; either that must be True and Reasonable which *all* Understandings do *consent* and *agree* in, or *all* the Understandings that are in the World must be under a fatal *Cheat* and *Delusion*. Which latter being supposed, inevitably destroys all *Knowledge* and *Certainty*, and lays a Foundation for the wildest *Scepticism*. For supposing all Understandings to be *deceived* and *imposed* on, it is impossible for us to be *certain* of any thing, and for all we know, a Part may be bigger than the Whole, two and two may make twenty, and both parts of a Contradiction may be true. Nay we can never be certain whether we are not Dreaming when we think we are Awake, and whether we are not Awake when we think we are Dreaming. Either therefore we must *renounce* all Certainty whatsoever, and *fluctuate* in eternal Scepticism, or *allow* that to be True and Reasonable which all Understandings do unanimously vote so.

IV. That

IV. That there are certain Rules of Moral Goodness concerning the immutable Reason whereof all Understandings are *agreed*. For such are all those which prescribe the Dueness of *Worship* and *Veneration* to God, of *Obedience* and *Loyalty* to our Parents and Superiors, of *Temperance* and *Fortitude* to ourselves, and of *Justice* and *Charity* to one another; to the Goodness and Reasonableness of which Rules, all Understandings do as unanimously *consent*, as to the Truth of any Proposition in the Mathematicks. Now of all the Orders of reasonable Beings, that which we most *converse* with, and with whose Consent and Agreement in any matters we are best *acquainted*, is that of *Men*; and therefore if among Men we can discover such an Universal *Agreement* concerning the Goodness of these Rules as will warrant us to conclude all other Rational Beings to be *consenting* with them, this will be a sufficient Demonstration of the Truth of the Proposition. These two things therefore I shall endeavour to make out, 1. That the Reason of Men is *Universally* consenting in this Matter, *viz.* That there is an *immutable* Goodness in these Rules of Morality. 2. That this Universal Consent of *Mens* Reason in this Matter is a sufficient Demonstration that all *other* reasonable Beings are consenting with them.

First, Therefore there is nothing more evident than that *Men* are universally agreed in this Matter, that to *Worship* God, to *Honour* their Parents and Superiors, to be *temperate* in their Passions and Appetites, and *just* and *charitable* towards one another, are things in their own nature *immutably* good; that this is not an Opinion pecu-

liar to such an Age, or to such a *Nation*, or to such a *Sett* of Religion, but the *Universal* Judgment of all Mankind of whatsoever Age, Nation, or Religion. For 'tis upon this Judgment that all that *Conscience* is founded which approves of or condemns Mens Actions; which Conscience is nothing else but a Sense or Feeling of Moral Good and Evil; and is every whit as natural to Mens Minds, as the Sense of pleasant or painful Touches to their Bodies. Since therefore general *Effects* must spring from general *Causes*, it necessarily follows that that *Pain* and *Pleasure* which Mens Minds generally feel upon the Commission of *bad* and *good* Actions, must be resolved into some general Cause; and what else can that be, but the general *Consent* of their Reason concerning the immutable Evil of the *one* and Good of the *other*? I know 'tis pretended by some of our Modern Navigators, that there are a sort of People in the World who have not the least sense of Good and Evil, and do own neither *God*, nor *Religion*, nor *Morality*. But considering the short Converse and imperfect Intercourse which these our new Discoveries have had with those Barbarous Countries, it is fairly supposed that the Inhabitants may have Notions both *Religious* and *Moral*, of which Strangers who understand not their Language and Customs, and Manners, can make little or no Discovery. But suppose that what they report were *true*; yet by their own Confession these wretched *Barbarians* are in all other things so extremely Brutish, that they discover no other token of their Humanity but their Shape. For they live altogether *regardless* of themselves, of the

Conveniences

Conveniences of their Lives, and of the *Dignity* of their Natures, without making any *Reflections* on their own Minds, or any *Observations* from their own Experience. Since therefore all Knowledge is acquired by Attention, it is not at all impossible for Creatures so utterly *supine* and *negligent* to be ignorant of the most common Notions. But for any Man to question the Truth of this *general* Rule, because there are a few *Exceptions* from it, is every whit as absurd as if he should question whether Men are generally *two-legged* Animals, because there have been some Monsters with *three*. And what if among Men there are some Monsters in respect of their *Minds*, as well as others in respect of their *Bodies*? This is no more a prejudice to the standing Laws of *Human* Nature, than *Prodigies* are to the Regularity of the constant course of *Universal* Nature. *Specimen naturæ cujuslibet*, saith Tully, *à natura optima sumendum est*, i. e. *The true sample of every Nature is to be taken from the best Natures of the Kind*. Since therefore the Men of all Nations and Ages and Religions, who have in any measure attended to the Nature of things, and made but any tolerable use of their Reasons, are, and always have been *universally* agreed that there is an immutable Good in Virtue, and Evil in Vice; it is no Argument at all that this is not the *general Sense* of Mankind, supposing it *true* which is very *questionable*, that there are some *few* such inhuman Barbarians in the World as make no distinction at all between 'em. But then,

Secondly, This Universal Consent of *Mens* Reason in this matter, is a sufficient Demonstration that

that all *other* Reasonable Beings are consenting with them. For it shews that God himself is of this Mind; and if *He* be, we may be sure that all *other* Reasonable Beings are. For if we believe that God made us, we must believe that he made us for some *End*; and if he made us for any *End*, he must esteem those Actions *good* which *promote* it, and those *evil* which *obstruct* and *hinder* it. And what other *End* can an infinitely happy and blessed Being have in making other Beings; but only to do 'em good, and according to their several Capacities to make them partakers of his own Happiness? And if this be the end for which God made us, to be sure those Actions must be *good* in his esteem that are *beneficial*, and those *evil* that are *hurtful* and *mischievous* to our Nature. And therefore since he hath implanted in us not only a natural *Desire* of Happiness; but also a rational *Faculty* to discern what Actions make for our Happiness, and what not, we may be sure that whatsoever this Faculty doth *universally* determine to be good or evil for us, is good or evil in the Judgment of *God*. 'Tis true, when the Reason that is in *one* Man judges contrary to the Reason that is in *another*, there must be a *Disagreement* on one side or the other from the Reason and Judgment of *God*: but when *all* Mens Reason is agreed that *this* is good and *that* evil, it is plain that this is the Judgment of the rational Faculty which *naturally* makes such a *Distinction* of things. For there is no Man that uses his Reason can possibly think that *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Justice* and *Injustice*, *Mercy* and *Cruelty*, are equally *good* in themselves; his rational Faculty

only being so framed as that at the first glance and reflection, it naturally *distinguishes* 'em into *Good* and *Evil*. When therefore God hath created us with such a *Faculty* as naturally makes such a *Judgment* of Good and Evil, that *Judgment* must be God's as well as the *Faculty* which made it. That therefore which is the *unanimous Judgment* of all Men, must be the *natural Language* of the Rational Faculty; and that which is the natural Language of the Rational Faculty must be the Language of the *God of Nature*. For he who created me with such a Faculty as naturally judges *this* Good and *that* Evil, must either have the same Judgment *himself*, or create in me a Contradiction to his *own* Judgment; and that Judgment which he hath created in *me*, he must be supposed to create in *all other* Beings that are capable of Judging; otherwise he would be the Author of *Contradictory* Judgments. For, should one Rational Faculty naturally judge *this*, and another the *contrary*, they must necessarily be so framed as to *contradict* each other, and consequently he who framed both must be the Author of the Contradiction. So that this *universal Consent* of Men concerning the *Good* and *Evil* of Human Actions is a plain Evidence that God and all other Rational Beings are *consenting* with 'em.

V. And lastly, that Mens acting *conformably* to these Rules of Moral Goodness, in which they are thus *universally consenting*, hath by long and constant Experience been found most *conducive* to Mens Welfare and Happiness. For the Proof whereof I shall need urge no other Argument than this, that the great *Design* of all Human

Laws and Constitutions hath been to *secure* and enforce these Rules of *Morality*; which is a plain Argument that Men have always found by *Experience* that they are naturally good and productive of their Happiness and Welfare. For how can it be thought that after Men have had so many thousand Years *Trial* of Piety, and Justice, and Mercy, and Temperance, they should still be so solicitous to *fence* and *guard* 'em with Laws, had they not found 'em highly *advantageous*, and their Contraries as *Mischievous* to Mankind. For do but suppose that the Contraries to all Virtue were for *Experiment* sake imposed for some time upon Mankind, and it were made as Penal by the Laws of Nations to be *Pious*, and *Just*, *Merciful*, and *Temperate*, as it is now to be the Contrary; is it imaginable that *that* which we now call *Vice* should in process of time acquire the same Universal *Reputation* that *Virtue* hath always had among Men? Or at least, is it probable that after some *thousand* Years *Trial* and *Experience* of *such* a Law, Men should still be as much concerned to guard and enforce it, as they are and always have been to secure the Law of Piety and Virtue? No, it is most certain they would not. For the very enjoining of *Impiety*, *Injustice*, and *Cruelty* would be in effect to enjoin men to render themselves most *wretched* and *miserable*; to surrender up all the *Supports* of their Hope, the *Peace* of their Consciences, and the *Tranquillity* of their Minds; to live in everlasting *Broils* and *Discords*, then turn *Robbers* and *Cut-Throats* to one another, and utterly deprive themselves of all the *Comforts* and *Securities* of Human Societies.

So that there is no doubt but after a *few* Years of Experience of the mischievous Consequents of such a Law, the whole World would groan under it as an insupportable Tyranny, and even the most *Vicious* would soon grow quite weary of it, and heartily wish that it were for ever *Repealed*, and the good old Laws of Piety and Virtue *restored* and *enforced* upon Mankind. And if so, it is plain that Virtue and Vice are distinguished by their Natures into Good and Evil ; and that the Obligation we lie under to *practise* the one, and *abstain* from the other, are not founded in any *Arbitrary* Constitution, but in the *essential* Goodness and Malignity that inseparably adheres to them.

And if we consult the Experience of *particular* Men, we shall always find, that whereas *Impiety* and *Injustice*, *Fraud* and *Malice*, do naturally *torment* Mens Minds with Anguish and Confusion, *haunt* their Breasts with fearful Thoughts and dire Expectations, *harass* their Souls with perpetual Male-contentedness, and *intricate* their whole Lives with everlasting Shifts and Intrigues ; *Piety* and *Justice*, *Truth* and *Benevolence*, do as naturally *sooth* and *ravish* their Minds, fill 'em with *blessed* Hopes and *cheerful* Reflections ; *compose* their Passions, *strengthen* and *invigorate* their Hearts, and render the whole Course of their Lives *plain* and *direct*, *even* and *easy*. And hereby Virtue doth sensibly recommend itself to our Natures in all its Capacities, as being suited to the Satisfaction of all its reasonable Desires, and so by consequence designed to make up the *completest* and most *entire* Enjoyment. All which is

as plain and obvious to the Reason of Mankind as any Matter of fact that is before us. So that 'tis not only the *Reason*, but also the *Experience* of Mankind that universally agrees and consents in this great Truth, that there is such a Good in *Virtuous* and such an Evil in *Vicious* Actions, as doth *eternally* and *inseparably* cleave to their Natures.

And therefore since our Nature is to continue the same for ever; the same *Virtues* and *Vices* which are now the *Perfection* and *Depravation*, and consequently the *Happiness* and *Misery* of it, will be so *for ever*. From whence it necessarily follows, that our eternal *Happiness* and *Misery* is founded in the Course of our own Actions. So that as in the Course of a *virtuous* Life we are growing up into a State of *fixed* and *everlasting* Virtue, wherein we shall be everlastingly *Perfect* and *Happy*; so on the contrary, in a course of *vicious* Actions we are sinking into a state of *everlasting* Viciousness, wherein we shall be everlastingly *wretched* and *miserable*. For since Virtue is *good* for, and Vice *evil* to us in its own Nature, it necessarily follows that according as we remain *Virtuous* or *Vicious* for ever, our Condition must be *good* or *evil* for ever. And this being so, of what unspeakable Consequence are the Actions of Men, that thus draw after 'em a Chain of *Joys* or *Woes* as long as Eternity; and how careful ought we to be, to what course of Life we determine ourselves, considering that our *eternal* Fate depends upon what we are now doing: That every Moral Action we perform is a step *Heaven* or *Hellwards*; that in every bad or good Choice we make,

we are planting our *Tophet* or our *Paradise*; and that in the Consequents of our present Actions we shall *rue* or *rejoice* to eternal Ages? O would to God Men would at last be so wise as to consider these things before it be too late, and not live at Random as they do, without any Regard to the certain and unavoidable Fate of their own Actions! For doubtless would they but thoroughly weigh the *Nature* and *Event* of things, and look before they leap into actions, they would see infinitely more *Charm* and *Terror* in that *Good* and *Evil* which inseparably adheres to virtuous and vicious Actions, than in all the Temptations in the World. Wherefore in the name of God let us look about us, and for once resolve to act like Beings that must for ever feel the *bad* or *good* effects of our own Doings. Which if we do, we shall not only live well and happily here, but to all Eternity experience the blessed Consequents of it.

S E C T. II.

That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those Human Actions are which are Morally Good, and upon that account perpetually obliging.

THE Truth of which will evidently appear by considering the Particulars; what it is that God hath done in order to the making this

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great *Discovery* to us; the most considerable of which are reducible to these six Heads:

First, He hath implanted in us a Natural *Desire* of Happiness.

Secondly, He hath given us Reason to *discern* what Actions they are that make for our Happiness, and what not.

Thirdly, He hath so contrived our Natures as that we are thrust on by our own *Instincts* and *Passions*, to those Actions which make for our Happiness.

Fourthly, He hath taken care to excite and oblige us to those Actions, by annexing natural *Rewards* to them, and entailing natural *Punishments* on their Contraries.

Fifthly, To strengthen and enforce this Obligation, he hath frequently superadded to these natural Rewards and Punishments *supernatural Blessings* and *Judgments*.

Sixthly, That to enforce all this, he hath made fundry supernatural *Revelations*, wherein he hath plainly told us what those things are that carry with them this intrinsic Good and Necessity.

I. God hath taken care to discover to us what is morally Good, by implanting in us a natural *Desire* of Happiness, which is so inseparable to Human Nature, and it is *impossible* for us to forbear desiring what *is* good for us, or at least what *appears* so. For tho' through our own Ignorance and Inconsideration we many times mistake *Evil* for *Good*, and *Misery* for *Happiness*, yet such is the Frame of our Nature, that we cannot desire Evil *as* Evil, or Misery *as* Misery; but whensoever we embrace a *real* Evil, it is either under the
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Notion of a *less* Evil, or of a *real* and *substantial* Good. Now by this unquenchable *Thirst* and *Desire* of Happiness which God hath implanted in our Nature, we are continually *importuned* and *excited* to search out and enquire by what Ways and Means we may arrive to be Happy. So that as *Hunger* and *Thirst* and the Sense of bodily *Pain* and *Pleasure* forceth Men upon the Invention of *Trades*, and *Civil Occupations* to supply their Necessities and Conveniences: So this vehement Hunger and Thirst after Happiness, which God hath created in our Bosoms, doth almost *necessitate* and *constrain* us to pry into the Nature of our Actions; that so we may discover what Trade and Course of Life it is that tends most directly to our own Felicity. And by thus *importuning* us by our own *self-love* to enquire into the Nature of our Actions, and into their natural Tendencies to our Weal or Woe, he hath not only expressed his good Will towards us by taking *Security* of ourselves for our own Welfare, and obliging us to be happy by the most *tender* and *vigorous* Passion in our Natures, but hath also taken an effectual Course to discover to us the Good and Evil of our own Actions; Considering,

II. That he hath given us Reason to *discern* what Actions they are that make for our Happiness, and what not. 'Tis true, had he only implanted in our Breasts a *blind* Desire of Happiness, without any Eye of Reason in our Heads to *guide* and *direct* our Actions towards it, we must have wandered in the Dark for ever, till we had pined away our wretched Beings with a *hungry* and *unsatisfied* Desire. But by giving us a *quick-sighted*

Faculty of Reason to *guide* and *conduct* this our blind Desire, he hath taken sufficient care not only to *excite* our Enquiry after the Way to Happiness, but also to *enable* us to find it. For the natural tendencies of our Actions to our Happiness or Misery are so very *obvious* and *visible*, that we can scarce open our Eyes and look abroad without *observing* them. For how can any Man who makes any Observations upon things, be so stupid as not to *discern* the vast difference there is between *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Justice* and *Injustice*, as to their natural tendency to the *Good* and *Hurt*, *Happiness* and *Misery* of Mankind? 'Tis true, if Men will neglect *using* their Reason, they may be ignorant of the *plainest* Propositions; but if they be, 'tis their *inexcusable* Folly. But if Men will be so true to their own Interest, as calmly to *reflect* upon their Actions, their Sense cannot more readily distinguish between *Honey* and *Gall*, than their Reason will between *Virtue* and *Vice*; the fundamental Reasons of which are so *legible* in all the Appearances of Nature, so *necessary* to the Being and Preservation of Mankind, and their Equity is so *apparent*, and their Convenience so *obvious*, that a Man can hardly reflect upon any thing either *within* or *without* him, without being convinced of their Force and Obligation. So that for a Man that hath the use of his Reason not to observe the Difference of his Actions, as to their *intrinsick* Good and Evil, and necessary Tendency to his Happiness and Misery, would be as *gross* and *inexcusable* a Stupidity, as if he should pass through the World without ever taking notice that two and two makes four. God therefore by giving

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us a reasonable Faculty to *discern* the nature of things, upon which the Differences of Good and Evil are so *plainly* and *legibly* imprinted, hath hereby taken sufficient Care to shew us the difference of our own Actions. For, to inspire us with a Faculty of *Reasoning*, by which we can *form* true Notions of things from single Experiments, and *infer* one truth from another, and *immediately* to inspire this Faculty with *Divine Truth*, are only two different Modes of *Divine Revelation*; and God did as *really* reveal himself to us when he *gave* us Reason to understand his Will, and when he *sent* to us his Messengers from Heaven to make known his Mind and Will to us. For God hath so framed our Understandings, as that whensoever we impartially reason about things, we are *forced* to distinguish between Good and Evil, and cannot persuade ourselves without doing infinite *Violence* to our own Faculties, that to *Blaspheme* God or to *Reverence* him, *lye* or *speak Truth*, to *honour* our Parents, or to *scorn* and *despise* them are things of an indifferent Nature; but as soon as ever we open the Eye of our Reason, we discern such an *essential* Difference between them, as forces us to *condemn* the one and *approve* the other. And accordingly as for the greatest strokes of Iniquity, we find they have as much the Universal Judgment of our Reason against them as any *false Conclusion* in the Mathematicks; whilst the Goodness of their contrary Virtues is as universally acknowledged by us as the Truth of any *first Principle* in Philosophy. Since therefore God hath so framed our Understanding as that it cannot calmly reflect upon our Actions without distinguishing between the

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the good and bad, he hath hereby sufficiently revealed to us what that good is that immutably binds and obliges us.

III. God hath so contrived our Natures, as that we are thrust on by our own *Instincts* and *Passions* to those Actions which are morally Good and do make for our Happiness. For we are framed and constituted with such Passions and Affections as do naturally *point* and *direct* us unto virtuous Actions; and though by the Constitution of our Natures, our Passions are subjected to our Reason, and all our Virtue consists in being *reasonably affected*, yet in the very Nature of our Passions there is a certain *Tendency* and *Direction* to Virtue, antecedent to all our *Reasoning* and *Discourse*. Which *Theages* the Pythagorean styles Παρόρμησις ἢ ἐνθουσιασμός τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἀρετῆς, a certain natural Impetus or Enthusiasm, by which without any previous Discourse or Deliberation we are forcibly carried on towards virtuous Actions. For some Affections there are in our Nature, which do in the general plainly signify to us that there is such a thing as Moral Good and Evil in Human Actions; and others that do plainly point out what those Actions are wherein this moral Good and Evil is subjected. Of the first Sort are the Affections of Love and Hatred, Complacency and Horror, Glory and Shame, Repentance and Self-Satisfaction; which plainly declare that there are answerable Objects in the Nature of Things and Actions; that there is a Good to be *beloved* and an Evil to be *hated*, a Deformity to be *abhorred*, and a Beauty to be *delighted in*; an Excellency to be *glorified in*, and a Filthiness to be *ashamed*

ashamed of; a Well-doing to be *satisfied with*, and an Ill-doing to be *repented of*. For if there were no such real Distinctions in the Nature of Things and Actions, all these Affections in us would be utterly *vain and impertinent*. And as *these* Affections of our Nature do signify in the *general* that there is a moral Good and Evil in our Actions, so there are others which do *particularly* point out *what* Actions are morally Good and what Evil. Thus for Instance, the Passions of *Veneration* and *Disdain* do plainly direct us to Honour God and our Superiors, and to be constant in good Courses out of a generous *Scorn of* all Temptations to the contrary. Thus *Commiseration* and *Envy* direct us to Charity and Justice, to *lament* and *assist* those who are *undeservedly* unfortunate, and to be *displeased* with the Advancement of *base* and *undeserving* People; and consequently to be *just* and *equal* in our Distributions, and to *proportion* them to Mens Merit and Desert. For by this Passion of Envy, Nature teaches us that there is such a thing as *just* and *unjust*, *equal* and *unequal*, and that the former is to be *embraced*, and the latter to be *shunned*. And to name no more, thus *Sorrow* and *Joy* doth by silent Language dissuade us from *injuring*, and persuade us to *benefit* one another. For so by the mournful Voice, the dejected Eyes and Countenance, the Sighs, and Groans, and Tears, of the *sorrowful* and *oppressed*, (all which are the powerful Rhetorick of Nature) we are importuned not only to *forbear* heaping any further Injuries upon them, but also to *commiserate* their Grievs, and by our timely Aids to *succour* and *relieve* them.

As on the contrary the florid and chearful Looks, the pleasant and grateful Air which we behold in those that *rejoice*, are so many Charms and Attractives by which Nature allures us to mutual *Urbanity* and *Sweetness* of Behaviour, and a continual Study to *please* and *gratify* one another. By these and many other instances I might give, it is evident that though by our own ill Government we too often *deprave* our Affections and *corrupt* them into Vices, yet their *natural* Drift and Tendency lies towards Virtue. Thus by their own natural Light which they carry before us, they *direct* our steps to the Way we are to walk in, and point out all those Tracts of eternal Goodness that lead to our Happiness. For since these Affections are in us antecedently to all our Deliberations and Choices, it is evident they were placed there by the *Author* of our Natures; and therefore since 'tis *He* who hath inclined them to all that they naturally incline to, *He* doth in Effect direct and guide us by *their* Inclinations. So that *their* natural Tendencies and Directions are the *Voice of God* in our Natures, which *murmurs* and *whispers* to us that natural Law which our Reason indeed doth more *plainly* and *articulately* promulge. And from this natural Tendency of our Affections to Good, proceeds that *pleasant* and *painful* Sense of *good* and *bad* Actions, which we experience in ourselves before ever we can discourse. For thus before we are capable of reasoning ourselves into any Pleasure or Displeasure, our Nature is *rejoiced* in a kind of just Action either in ourselves or others, and we are sensibly *pleased* when we have pleased those that oblige us,
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and as sensibly *grieved* when we are conscious of having *grieved* and *offended* them. We *love* to see those fare well who we imagine have deserved well; and when any unjust Violence is offered them, our Nature *shrinks at*, and *abhors* it. We *pity* and *compassionate* the Miserable when we know not *why*; and are ready to offer at their Relief when we can give no Reason for it; which shews that these things proceed not either from our *Education* or deliberate *Choice*, but from the Nature of our Affections which have a *Sympathy* with Virtue, and an *Antipathy* to Vice implanted in their very Constitution. And hence it is that in the Beginnings of Sin our Nature is commonly so *shy* of an evil Action; that it approaches it with such a modest *Coyness*, and goes *blushing* to it like a bashful Virgin to an Adulterer's Bed; that it passes into it with such *Regret* and *Reluctancy*, and looks back upon it with such *Shame* and *Confusion*; which in our tender Years, when as yet we are not arrived to the Exercise of our Understandings, cannot be supposed to proceed from *Reason* and *Conscience*, and therefore must be from the *natural* Sense of our Affections, which by these and such like Indications do signify that they are *violated* and *offended*. Now this natural Sense of Good and Evil which springs from the *Frame* and *Nature* of our Affections, was doubtless intended by God to be the *first* Guide of Human Nature; that so when as yet 'tis not capable of following Reason and Conscience, it might be directed to what is good, and preserved from wicked Habits and Prejudices by its own *Sense* and *Feeling*, till such time as it is capable of the

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Conduct of Reason, that so when this leading Faculty undertakes the Charge of it, it may find it *pliant* and *obsequious* to its *Dictates*; and be able to manage it with more *Ease* and *Facility*; and that by the Natural Drift and Tendency of our Affections God hath plainly *revealed* to us what is good and what not.

IV. God hath also entailed upon our Actions natural *Rewards* and *Punishments*, and thereby plainly declared which are *good* and which *evil*. For it is easily demonstrable by an Induction of Particulars, that every Virtue hath some natural Efficacy in it to advance both our *publick* Good and our *private* Interest. That *Temperance* and *Charity*, *Righteousness* and *Fidelity*, *Gratitude* and *Humility* are not only *convenient*, but absolutely *necessary* to our Joy and Comfort, our Peace and Quietness, our Safety and Contentment; to the Health of our *Body*, and the Satisfaction of our *Mind*, and the Security and Happiness of our *Society* with one another. Whereas on the contrary, Vice naturally teems with *mischievous* Effects, and is ever productive of *Horror* in the Conscience, *Anguish* in the Mind, *Discord* in the Affections, *Diseases* in the Body, and *Confusions* and *Disturbances* in Human Society. Since therefore the Divine Wisdom and Contrivance hath thus inseparably coupled good Effects to good Actions and evil ones to evil, it hath hereby very *plainly* and *sensibly* declared to us what it would have us *do* and what *not*. For seeing it hath so constituted Things as that in the Course of Nature such Proportions of *Happiness* do necessarily result to us from *such* Actions, and such Proportions of *Misery*

ſery from their *Contraries*, what can be more evident than that its Design was hereby to *encourage* us to the one and *affright* us from the other? So that by theſe *natural* Rewards and Punishments which in the Courſe of things God hath chained to our Actions, he hath as *expreſſly* preſcribed us what to do and what not, as he could have done if he had ſpoken to us in an *audible* Voice from the Battlements of Heaven. For ſince the whole Train of Natural Effects is to be reſolved into the *Providence* of God, and ſince his Providence hath ſo *ordered* and *contrived* Things, as that in the ordinary Courſe of them *good* Effects do ſpring out of *good* Actions and *evil* of *evil* ones, what elſe could he intend by it but to *allure* us to the one, and *terrify* us from the other? For it is by *Rewards* and *Punishments* that all Law-givers declare their Will and Pleaſure concerning thoſe Actions which they *command* and *forbid*: and therefore ſince God in his Providential Government of the World hath thought good to link natural *Rewards* to *ſuch* actions, and natural *Punishments* to *ſuch*, theſe are to be looked upon as the great *Sanctions* of the Law of Nature, whereby he commands what *pleaſes*, and prohibits what *diſpleaſes* him. For when God had no otherwiſe revealed himſelf to the World than only by the eſtabliſhed *Courſe* and *Nature* of Things, *that* was the great *Bible* by which alone Mankind was inſtructed in their Duty; and there being no *revealed* Threats or Promiſes annexed to good and bad Actions, God's Will and Pleaſure concerning them was *viſible* only in the *good* and *bad* Conſequents which they drew after them; which are ſo

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plain and *obvious* to the Observation of Mankind, that 'twould be the most *inexcusable* Inadvertency not to take notice of them. So that the *moral* Good and Evil of all Actions, finally resolves into the *natural* Good and Evil that is appendant to them; and therefore are our Actions morally *good* because they are naturally *beneficial* to us, and therefore morally *evil* because they are naturally *prejudicial* and *hurtful*; and those which in their own nature are neither good nor evil, are *indifferent* in themselves, and left altogether *undetermined* by the Law of Nature, which *commands* and *forbids* nothing but under the Sanction of those *natural* Rewards and Punishments which in the Course of things are made necessary to Human Actions.

V. To these *natural* Rewards and Punishments which God hath entailed upon good and bad Actions, he hath thought a good many times to superadd *supernatural Blessings* and *Judgments*. For though he had before sufficiently expressed his Will concerning Human Actions in the great *Bible of Nature*, and by their *natural* Effects had plainly enough distinguished the *good* from the *bad*; yet considering what *beedlefs* and *inobser-vant* Creatures we are, and how apt to *overlook* the ordinary Consequents of our Actions, he hath not altogether abandoned us to the easy Instructions of Nature, but out of his superabundant Care to shew us what is Good and lead us to our Duty and Happiness, he hath from time to time seconded the *natural* Rewards and Punishments of our Actions with *supernatural Favours* and *Judgments*; that so by these he might
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awake our drowſy Attention, and revive in us the *languiſhing* ſenſe of our Duty. Of which we have infinite Inſtances in the ſeveral Ages of the World; there being ſcarce any Hiſtory either Sacred or Profane that abounds not with them. Several of which, both Bleſſings and Judgments, do as plainly evince themſelves to be *intended* by God for *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, as if they had been attended with a Voice from Heaven proclaiming the Reaſons for which they were ſent. For how many famous Inſtances have we of miraculous *Deliverances* of *Righteous* Perſons, who by an *Inviſible* Hand have been *reſcued* from the greateſt Dangers, when in all outward Appearance their Condition was *hopeleſs* and *deſperate*; and of wonderful Bleſſings that have happened to them not only *without* but *contrary* to all ſecondary Cauſes; of ſome that have been ſo eminently rewarded *in kind*, as that the Goods which they *received* were moſt viſible Significations of the Goods which they *did*; and others who have received the Bleſſings which they have aſked, *whiſt* they were *praying* for them, and obtaining them with ſuch *diftinguiſhing* Circumſtances as plainly ſignified them to be the *Answers* and *Returns* of their devout Addreſſes to Heaven? And ſo on the contrary, how many notable Examples are there of ſuch miraculous *Judgments* inflicted upon *unrighteous* Perſons, as have either *exceeded* the Power of ſecondary Cauſes, or been cauſed by them *contrary* to their *natural* Tendencies? Of Men that have been puniſhed in the very *Act* of their Sin, and ſometimes in the very *Part* by which they have offended; that have had the evil of their *Sin* retaliated upon

them in a *correspondent* Evil of *Suffering*, and been *struck* with those very Judgments which they have *imprecated* on themselves in the Justification of a known Falshood? All which *supernatural* Judgments and Blessings of God are only his *Comments* on the *Text* of Nature, by which he farther explains to us the *Meaning* of those *natural* Rewards and Punishments which Virtue and Vice draw after them, and shews us what clear *Indications* they are of his Almighty *Pleasure* and *Displeasure*. For when he *rewards* Men *supernaturally*, it is for those Actions that carry a *natural* Reward with them; and when he *punishes* them *supernaturally*, it is for such Actions as do carry a *natural* Punishment with them; so that his *supernatural* Rewards and Punishments do speak the *same* Sense and Language with his *natural*, only they speak *plainer* and *louder*, to rouse and awake those stupid Souls that are *deaf* to and *regardless* of the soft and still voice of *natural* Rewards and Punishments. Thus when the old World by not attending to the *natural* Consequents of their own Actions, had almost extinguished their Sense of Good and Evil, God by a *supernatural Deluge* in which he drowned the *wicked* and preserved the *righteous*, consigned to all future Generations a standing *Monument* of his *Hatred* of Sin, and *Love* of *Righteousness*; that so by the *Remembrance* of it he might keep Mens heedless Minds more attentive to the *natural* Rewards and Punishments of their Actions. And when the *Remembrance* of *this* was almost *worn out*, and with it Mens *natural* Sense of good and evil, God by *raining down* Fire and Brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorra*; and *res-*
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cuing the Righteous *Lot* from that dire Conflagration, alarm'd the World with a new *Declaration* of the wide Distinction he makes between Virtue and Vice. And lastly, when the Virtue of these great Examples was almost *spent*, God raised up the People of *Israel*, and by the miraculous *Blessings* he bestowed on them when they did *well*, and the stupendous *Judgments* he inflicted when they did *wickedly*, exposed them to all the Nations round about for a standing *Demonstration* of the vast Difference he makes between Good and Evil. For so the Psalmist tells us, *Psa. xcvi. ver. 2. compared with Psalm cii. ver. 15. The Lord hath made known his Salvation, his Righteousness hath he openly shewed in the Sight of the Heathen; that the Heathen might fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory.* Thus by frequent Examples of supernatural Rewards and Punishments God hath been always *instructing* the degenerate World in the Essential Differences between Good and Evil.

VI. And lastly, To enforce all this God hath made sundry supernatural *Revelations*, wherein he hath plainly instructed us what Actions are *good* and what *evil*. That he hath made sundry *Revelations* to the World is evident in the Fact, because there are sundry Revelations *extant*, which by those many miraculous Effects of the Divine Power that attended the Ministration of them, have been sufficiently demonstrated to be of a *divine Original*. And such are those contained in the five Books of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*, which have been all most amply *confirmed*, both by the *Miracles* which were wrought by their inspired

Authors, and the exact *Accomplishment* of the several *Predictions* contained in them. And such is also the *last* and *best* Revelation contained in the *New Testament*; which both by the *Types* and *Predictions* of the *Law* and *Prophets*, and the infinite *Miracles* wrought by *Jesus* and his Followers, together with its own *inherent* Wisdom and Goodness, hath been so effectually proved a *Divine Revelation*, that nothing but Ignorance or inveterate Prejudice can cause any Man to *disbelieve* or *suspect* it.

Now if you consult these several Revelations, you will find that the main Drift and Design of them is to *detect* and *expose* what is morally Evil, and *explain* and *recommend* to us what is morally Good. For thus the several Revelations made to *Abraham* and his Children, were only so many *Repetitions* of that *Covenant of Righteousness* which God had struck with them, to encourage them to persevere in Well-doing. Thus the Law of *Moses* consisted partly in *Ceremonial Rites*, which were either intended for Divine *Hieroglyphicks* to instruct that *dull* and *stupid* People in the Principles of inward Purity and Goodness, or else for *Types* and *Figures* of the holy Mysteries of the Gospel; and partly of Precepts of *Morality*, together with some few of *Policy*, suited to the Genius of that People; and partly of such *Promises* and *Threats* as were judged most apt to oblige them to the Practice of Piety. And as for the *Prophets*, the substance of their Revelations was either *Reprebensions* of Sin, together with severe *Denuntiations* against it; or *Invitations* to Virtue and Piety, together with gracious *Promises*

ses to encourage them to practise it; or *Predictions* of the *Messias* and of that *everlasting Righteousness* which was to be introduced by him. And then as for the *Gospel*, all the Duty of it consists either in *Instances*, or *Means* and *Instruments* of Moral Goodness; and all the *Doctrines* of it are nothing but powerful *Arguments* to oblige us to the Practice of those Duties. Thus the great Intendment of all God's Revelations is to *explain* and *enforce* the Duties of Morality; to discover the *Nature*, and lead us on to the *Practice* of them by the most powerful Obligations. And in this most perfect *Map* of the Road to Happiness, all the *Traacts* of Piety and Virtue are so plainly *described* and *delineated* to us, that no Man can possibly *miss* his Way, that sincerely *enquires* after it. For though in matters of *Opinion* Men may be *innocently* misled and deceived, yet there is no Article either of *Doctrine* or *Duty* upon which our Happiness necessarily depends, wherein it is possible for an *honest* and *diligent* Mind to be mistaken. And thus you see by how many excellent ways God hath *discovered* to us which of our Actions are good and which evil. So that if after all this we proceed in any sinful and immoral Courses, we are utterly *inexcusable*. For if after God hath thus *plainly* made known his Will to us, we still persist to contradict it in our *Practice*, we do thereby in effect declare that we *regard not* the Almighty, and that we will *do* what we list, let him *will* what he pleases. And what an unpardonable Insolence is it for us who depend upon his Breath, and hang upon his Providence every Moment, to treat him as if he had

nothing to do with us, and were the mereſt *Cypher* and moſt *inſignificant* Being in the World? For though it is true he hath not made ſo *full* a Diſcovery of his Will to *ſome* as to *others*, yet he hath ſo *ſufficiently* diſcovered it to *all*, that none can pretend to the Excuse either of *invincible* or *unaffected* Ignorance. For as for the Heathen, tho' they have no Revelation of God's Will *without* them, yet they have the Bible of Conſcience *within* them, and the large and legible Bible of Nature that lies continually open *before* them, in which they may eaſily read the *principal* Differences between Good and Evil, and all the great Principles of Morality. And if notwithstanding this they will be ſo regardless of God as not to *attend* to and *comply* with thoſe natural Discoveries of his Will, what Pretence can be made for them why they ſhould not periſh for ever in their obſtinacy? For as the Apoſtle tells us, *tho' they had not the Law*, that is, the revealed Law, *yet they did*, or at leaſt might have done, *by nature the things contained in the Law*; and therefore as many of them, ſaith he, *as ſinned without this revealed Law, ſhall periſh without the Law*, that is, by the Sentence of the Law of Nature, *Rom. ii. 12, 14.* And then as for the *Jews*, beſides thoſe *natural* Indications of God's Will which they had in common with the Heathen, they had ſundry *ſupernatural* ones; they had ſundry great and notorious Examples of God's *rewarding* good Men, and *puniſhing* bad; and beſides they had the Law of *Mofes*, the *Moral* part of which was but a *new Edition* of the Law of Nature; as for the *Ceremonial* Part of it, it was thought an *obſcure*, yet an *intelligible*

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Representation of all those sublime Motives to Piety and Virtue, which the Gospel more *plainly* proposes. So that would the *Jews* but have heedfully attended either to the *spiritual Sense* of their Law, or to the *Sermons* of their *Prophets* which very much *cleared* and *explained* it, they could not have been ignorant either of any material Part of their *Duty*, or of any considerable *Motive* by which it is pressed and enforced. And if notwithstanding, they would be so *regardless* of God, as to take no notice of his *Judgments* and *Mercies*; so rude to his Authority as not to mind either his Law *within* or his Law *without* them, upon what reasonable Pretence can they excuse themselves? But then as to us Christians, we have not only all those *natural Discoveries* of our Duty which the *Heathen* had, and all those *Supernatural* ones which the *Jews* had, but a great deal more. For in our Revelation the *Laws* and *Motives* of Virtue are set before us in a much *clearer* Light, and are neither wrapt up in *Mystical* Senses, nor overcast with *typical* Representations, but laid before us in the most plain and easy Propositions. For that which was the *Mystical* Sense of the Jewish Law, is the *literal* Sense of the Christian; in which all those Precepts and Promises and Threats which were delivered to the *Jews* in *dark Riddles*, *obscure* and *typical* Adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the Curtain, and proposed in plain and popular Articles. So that if *we* still continue in our sinful Courses, we are of all Men the most *inexcusable*. The Heathen may plead against the *Jews*, that their Law of Nature was not so *clear* in its Precepts, nor yet so *cogent*

in its Motives as the Law of *Moses*; the *Jews* may plead against us Christians, that *their* Law of *Moses* was neither so *express* in the Precepts, nor yet so *intelligible* in its best and most powerful Motives as *our* Gospel; but as for us Christians, we have nothing to plead, but by our own Obstinacy, against the *clearest* Discoveries of our Duty, do stand condemned to everlasting Silence. So that when it shall appear at the dread Tribunal of God, that we have persisted in our Wickedness, notwithstanding all *these* Advantages, we must expect to be *reproached* by all the reasonable World, to be *exploded* and *hiss'd at*, not only by Saints and Angels, but by the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, and the Devils themselves, who will all conspire with our own Consciences to *second* our woeful *Doom* with the Loud Acclamation of *Just and Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy Ways*. Wherefore as we would not Perish for ever without *Pity* and *Excuse*, let us make haste to forsake *all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World*.

S E C T. III.

That those Actions which carry with them this perpetual Obligation are the main and principal Parts of Religion.

THE truth of which is most evident from the above-named Text, *Mich. vi. 8. And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Which Interrogation, tho' it implies not an *absolute* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord required *nothing else* of them (for under the Law he required *Sacrifices* and sundry other positive Duties, as under the Gospel he requires *Sacraments* and *Reading* and *Hearing* his holy Word, &c. which are *positive* Duties as well as those legal Institutions of *Moses*;) yet it plainly implies a *comparative* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord requires nothing else so *principally* and so *affectionately*, for the sake of *things themselves* and upon the account of their own *inherent* Beauty and Goodness, as he doth these Moral Duties here specified. He did indeed *require* the *Jews* to offer *Sacrifice* to him, and to perform those other *Ceremonial Rites* specified in the Law of *Moses*; and for them wilfully to have neglected those Duties would have been such an avowed Defiance to his Authority as would have rendered them justly obnoxious to all the Judgments threatned in their Law; but yet he did much more *earnestly* require them to be *just*, and *merciful*, and *humble*, and manifested himself to be

be far better pleased with *one* Act of Moral Goodness than with a *thousand* Sacrifices. And thus he requires of us Christians that we should communicate with him and with one another in our *Evangelical Sacraments*, and dutifully conform to all those sacred *Institutions* and *Solemnities* of Religion which are contained in the Gospel; and if we wilfully neglect them, we justly incur all that everlasting Vengeance which is there denounced; but yet our sincere Compliance with the *immutable* Obligations of Piety and Virtue, is a thousand-fold *more* acceptable to God than our strictest Observation of these his *positive* Institutions. So that the Question in the Text, *What doth the Lord require of thee* plainly implies this Proposition, that tho' God doth exact of us certain Duties which are *not* moral, *i. e.* have no *intrinsic* necessity in them, yet it is the Moral Duties, such as *Justice*, and *Mercy*, and *Humility*, which he principally requires at our hand. Thus concerning *Sacrifice*, God plainly tells us, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, i. e.* I will have Mercy rather than Sacrifice, *Hos. vi. 6.* And the Wise Man assures us that *to do Justice is more acceptable to the Lord than Sacrifice, Prov. ii. 3.* And to the same purpose our Saviour himself pronounceth, even before that Ceremonial Worship was abolished, that *to love the Lord with all our Heart, with all our Understanding, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength, and to love our Neighbour as ourselves is more than all Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, Mark x. 33.* But for the clearer Demonstration of this great and necessary Truth, I shall endeavour, First, to prove the *Truth* of it by some Scripture Arguments.

Secondly,

Secondly, to assign the *Reasons* of it. As for the *Proof* of it, the following Particulars will be abundantly sufficient.

First, That the Scripture plainly declares that the great *Design* of all the *Doctrinals* of Religion hath always been to *move* and *persuade* Men to the Practice of Moral Goodness.

Secondly, That the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion hath been always to *improve* and *perfect* Men to Moral Goodness.

Thirdly, That God expresses in Scripture a great *Contempt* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion, whenever they are *separated* from Moral Goodness.

Fourthly, That wherever we find the *Whole* of Religion *summed up* in a few Particulars; they are always such as are Instances of Moral Goodness.

Fifthly, That wherever such *Persons* as have been most *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *described* in Scripture, their *Churches* always consists of some Instances or other of Moral Goodness.

Sixthly, That the Scripture plainly declares that at the *great Account* between God and our Souls, the main *Inquisition* will be concerning our Moral Good or Evil.

I. The Scripture expressly declares that the great *Design* of the *Doctrines* of Religion is to *move* and *persuade* Men to Moral Goodness. For so the Apostle speaking of the *Grace of God*, *i. e.* the Gospel, assures us that its great *Design* is to *teach Men to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, Tit. ii. 12. And if we consider

the Doctrines in *Particular*, we shall find that they all conspire in this great Design. For so the Doctrine of *eternal Life* is proposed by God to persuade us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. So also the Doctrine of our *future Punishment* is levelled against *all unrighteousness and ungodliness of Men*, Rom. i. 18. And as for these Doctrines which concern the *Transactions* of our Saviour, they are all proposed to us as *Arguments* to persuade us to Piety and Virtue. For it was *for this cause that Christ was manifested, to destroy the Works of the Devil*, 1 John iii. 8. It was for this purpose that *he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to Sin should live to Righteousness*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. It was for this end that *he rose from the Dead*, that thereby he might prevail with us to *walk in newness of Life*, Rom. vi. 4. and 'tis for this end that *he intercedes for us* at the right-hand of God, that thereby he might encourage us *to come to God by him*, Heb. vii. 2. and in a Word, for this cause he hath told us *he will come to Judgment*, to reward every Man according to his Works, that thereby he might stir us up to Sobriety and Vigilance and to *all holy Conversation and Godliness*, Matt. xxiv. 42. comp. with 2 Pet. iii. 11. Thus you see all the Doctrines of Religion are only so many *Topicks* of Divine *Persuasion*, whereby God addresses himself to our *Hope* and *Fear*, and every other *Affection* in us that is capable of Persuasion, to excite us to comply with the eternal Obligations of Morality; and there is no one *Article* in all our Religion, that is matter of mere *Speculation*, or that entertains our

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Minds with *dry* and *empty* Notions that have no Influence on our *Wills* and *Affections*. For since the Design of Religion in *general*, is to *bind* and *fasten* our Souls to God, we may be sure that there is no *Part* of it but what doth in some measure contribute hereunto. Since therefore 'tis Moral Goodness that God chiefly recommends to us by the Persuasions of Religion, we may be sure that what his *Arguments* do chiefly *persuade* us to, that his *Commands* do chiefly *oblige* us to.

II. From Scripture it is also evident that the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion is to *improve* and *perfect* Men in Moral Goodness. We find the *Jewish* Religion exceedingly abounded with *positive* Precepts; for *such* were all those sacred *Rights* and *Solemnities* of which the Bark and Outside of that Religion consisted; of all which it is true what the Psalmist saith of *Sacrifices* in particular, *Thou desirest not Sacrifices, thou delightest not in Burnt Offerings*, Psa. li. 16. that is, thou takest no Delight in them upon the Score of any *internal* Goodness that is in them, but desirest them merely as they are *instituted Means* and *Instruments* of Moral Goodness. For so many of the Rites of the *Mosaic* Law were instituted in Opposition to the *Magical*, *Unclean*, and *Idolatrous*, Rites of the *Eastern* Heathen. As particularly, that Prohibition of *sowing their Fields with mingled Seed*, Lev. xix. 19. in Opposition to that *Magical* Rite which the Heathens used as a *Charm* for Fructification. So also that Command of sprinkling the Blood of their Sacrifices upon the Ground like Water and covering it with Dust, in Opposition to that *Idolatrous* Rite of gathering the
Blood

Blood into a *Trench* or *Vessel*, and then *sitting round* it in a *Circle*, whilst they imagined their Gods to be *licking* it up. And to name no more of this Kind, the Prohibition of *seething a Kid in his Mother's Milk*, *Exod. xxiii. 10.* was in Opposition to a Custom of the ancient Heathens, who at the *Ingathering* of their Fruits were wont to take a Kid and seeth it in the Milk of its Dam, and then in a *Magical Procession* to sprinkle all their *Trees, and Fields, and Gardens*, with it, thereby to render them more fruitful the following Year. Besides all which you may find a World of other Instances in *Maimonides More Nevoch. lib. 3.* who tells us, that the Knowledge of the Opinions and Customs of these *Eastern Churches* was *Porta magna ad reddendas præceptorum causas, the great Rationale of the Mosaick Precepts*; and that *multarum legum rationes & causæ mihi innotuerint ex cognitione fidei, rituum & Cultus Zabiorum, i. e. that by being acquainted with the Opinions and Customs of those Eastern Heathens, he understood the Grounds and Reasons of many of the Laws of Moses, More Nevoch. lib. 3. cap. 29.* So that though these Precepts were *not* moral, yet were they set up as so many *Fences* by God, to keep the People from *stragling* into those Heathenish Immoralities.

Again, there are *other* Rites of their Religion, which were instituted to *shadow out* the *Holy Mysteries* of the Gospel; the great Design of which Mysteries was to *invite and persuade* Men to comply with the eternal Laws of Morality. Thus their Laws of *Sacrifice* were instituted to *represent* to them the great Transactions of their future *Messias*; his *Incarnation* and immaculate Life,
his

his *Death* and *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, and *Intercession* at the Right-hand of God. So also their *Festival Laws*, and particularly their *Laws of Jubilee*, were made to *shadow out* their *Doctrines* of our *Redemption* and *eternal Life*; and their pouring out *Water* in their *Sacrifices*, and their ritual *Purgations* from *Uncleanness*, were intended for obscure *Intimations* of the *Effusion* of the holy Spirit, and the *Doctrine* of *Remission of Sins*; all which *Doctrines* carry with them the most *pregnant* *Invitations* to *Piety* and *Virtue*.

Lastly, There are other *Rites* of that *Law* which were appointed to *instruct* them in moral *Duties*. For God finding them not only a *perverse*, but a *dull* and *sottish* People, as those generally are that have been born and bred in *Slavery*, apprehended that the most effectual *Way* to instruct them would be by *Signs* and material *Representations*, even as Parents do their Children by *Pictures*. And accordingly in *Isaiab* xxviii. 10. he tells us; that *he gave them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with a stammering tongue*; i. e. we looked upon them as *Children*, and so condescended to their *Weakness*, and spake to them in their own *Dialect*. And this *Way* of instructing them by *outward* and *visible* *Signs*, being much in use in the *Eastern* Countries, and more especially in *Egypt*, whose *Manners* they were infinitely *fond* of, was of all others the most *probable* and *taking*. And accordingly a great Part of the Jewish *Rites* consisted of *Hieroglyphicks*, or *visible* *Signs*, by which their *Minds* were *instructed* in the *Precepts* of *Morality*. Thus by *Circumcision* God signified to them the
Necessity

Necessity of *mortifying* their *unchaste* Desires; by their *Legal Washings*, he intimated to them their Obligations to *cleanse* themselves from all *Impurities* of Flesh and Spirit; yea this, as St. *Barnabas* in his Epistle tells us, was the Intent of all that Difference of *Meats* in the Jewish Law, which pronounced *Swines Flesh* *unclean*, to instruct them not to live like Hogs, that *wallow* in the Mire while they are *full*, and *whine* and *clamour* when they are *empty*; which forbid them to feed on *Eagles* and other Birds of *Prey*, to instruct them to live by *honest Industry*, and not by *Rapine*; which prohibits Fish without *Scales*, that generally live in the *Mud*, to teach the evil of *Sensuality* and *earthly Mindedness*, &c. From all which it is evident that Moral Goodness was the constant *Mark* at which all the positive Precepts of their Law were *levelled*.

And then as for the *Christian Religion*, all the *positive* Precepts it contains are directed to the *same* End. It requires us to *believe* in Jesus Christ, and in his Mediation to *draw near unto God*; the Design of which *Faith* it expressly tells us is to *Sanctify our Natures*, Acts xxvi. 18. and to *purify our Hearts*, Acts xv. 9. It enjoins us to be *Baptized* into the Name of Jesus; and for what purpose? but to oblige us thereby to *die to Sin and to walk in newness of Life*, Rom. vi. 4. It requires us to *commemorate* our Saviour's Passion in a *Sacramental Communion* of his Body and Blood; and to what End? but only to excite us to *Love* and *Thankfulness* to God, and *Charity* towards one another, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. In a Word, it requires us to live in *Unity* with the *Church*, and not to *separate*

parate ourselves from her sacred Assemblies ; and for what other reason, but that we might become *an holy Temple, and an habitation of God*, by being *compact*ed together into an *uniform* and *regular* Society, *Ephes. ii. 21, 22.* Since therefore all the Precepts both of the *Old* and *New Testament* which are *purely positive*, do bear a *Respect* to Moral Goodness, and were imposed by God in *subserviency* thereunto, it is evident that that is the *principal* Mark which he *designs* and *aims* at.

III. Another Evidence from Scripture, that Moral Goodness is the *principal* matter of our Duty, is the great *Contempt* which God expresses of the *positive* Duties of Religion whenever they are *separated* from moral Goodness. For thus concerning the Positives of the *Jewish* Religion, we are told that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord*, *Prov. xv. 8.* And concerning the *Whole* of their *positive* Religion, the Prophet thus pronounces in the Name of God, *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt Offerings of Rams, and of the fat of fed Beasts, i. e. so full as that I loath them; and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of H-Goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required these things at your hands, to tread my Courts? bring no more vain Oblations, Incense is Abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even the solemn Meetings. Your new Moons and your appointed Feasts my Soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes, yea,*

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when ye make many Prayers I will not hear. And what I beseech you is the Reason that God should thus dislike his *own* Institutions? Why he plainly tells you, *your Hands are full of Blood, your Cruelty and Oppression doth profane your Worship, and turn it all into Impiety*, Isa. i. 11. to the 16th. For so *Isa. lxi. 3.* he plainly tells them, *He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood; he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol; and why so? why they have chosen their own Ways, i. e. of Impiety and Wickedness, and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations.* Nor doth God express a less Contempt of the Positives of Christianity, when separated from moral Goodness. For thus St. James tells us even of our Faith or Belief in Jesus, that *without Works it is dead; that it is a senseless, squalid Thing, that hath neither Life nor Beauty in it*, James ii. 17. And St. Peter compares Baptism to the washing of a Swine when it is separated from Purity of Life and Manners, 2 Pet. ii. 22. And our receiving the Lord's Supper without Charity and Devotion is by St. Paul stiled *coming together to Condemnation*, 1 Cor. xi. 34. All which is a plain Demonstration that moral Goodness is the principal Matter that God insists on; since it was *this* that sanctified the Sacrifices of the Jews, and crowned all the ceremonial Observances with the Divine Acceptation, and without this all their other Sacrifices were noisy and offensive to him; and it is this that perfumes our Faith and our Sacraments, our Prayers and Religious Assemblies, and renders them a grateful and

and *sweet smelling Savour* in the Nostrils of God, and *without* this they are all a hateful *Stench* and *Annoyance* to him. Doubtless therefore the *principal* Matter of Duty which God requires of us, is that which he esteems the *Grace* and *Fragrancy* of all other Duties.

IV. Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the principal Matter that God requires of us, is, that wherever we find the *Whole* of Religion *summed up* in a few Particulars, they are always such as are *Parts* and *Instances* of moral Goodness. Thus in the above cited *Mic. vi. 8.* *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Thus also the Prophet *Isaiab* giving an Account to his People what they were to do in order to their Reconciliation with God, thus directs them, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the Widow; come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, Isa. i. 16, 17, 18.* So also our Blessed Saviour sums up the *Whole Duty of Man* into two Particulars; And what are they? Why, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; this is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like to it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself; on these two Commandments hang the Law and the Prophets, Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40.* Thus St. James, *True Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the Fatherless and Widow in their Afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the World,*

James i. 27. And elsewhere the Apostle *sums up* the whole Law into one leading *Head* of Morality, and that is *Love*; for *love*, saith he, is *the fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. xiii. 10. So this Observation generally holds true, that in all those *Summaries* of Duty mentioned in the Holy Scripture, only *such* Duties are taken notice of as are *Parts* and *Instances* of Morality. Which is a plain Demonstration that it is this which God principally *requires*, since it is this which he most *takes notice of*; and it may be reasonably supposed that in those *Summaries* of our Duty wherein but a *few* parts are enumerated, they are such as are the *chief* and *principal*; it being contrary to all Rules of Language to express the *Whole* of any Thing by the *meanest* and most *inconsiderable* parts of it.

V. Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the *principal* matter of Duty that God requires of us, is, that wheresoever such *Persons* as have been most *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *described*, their *Character* is always made up of *Instances* of Morality. Thus the Description of *Job* is, *that he was a Man perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil*, Job i. 1. and in the 15th *Psalms* the Description which *David* gives of the Man who should abide in the Tabernacle of the Lord, is this, *that he walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his Heart; that he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his Neighbour, &c.* He that doth these things, saith he, *shall never be moved*. And the greatest Character that

that is given of *Moses the Darling and Favourite of God*, is, that *he was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the Earth*, Numb. xii. 3. Thus also the Character of *Cornelius* by which he was so *indeared to God*, is, that *he was a just and devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always*, Acts x. 2. And in a Word, the general Character of those whom God accepts, is, in every Nation, *he who doth righteousness is accepted of God*, Acts x. 35. Thus Moral Goodness is the great Stamp and Impress that renders Men current in the Esteem of God; whereas on the contrary, the common Brand by which *Hypocrites* and false Pretenders to Religion are *stigmatized*, is their being *zealous for the Positives*, and *cold*, and *indifferent*, as to the *Morals of Religion*. But so our Saviour characterises the Pharisees; *Woe unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye pay tythe of Mint, Annise and Cummin*, which yet was a *positive Duty*, and have omitted the *weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faithfulness*; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye blind Guides, ye strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel*, Matt. xxiii. 23, 24. plainly implying the *Morals of Religion* to be as much greater than the *Positives* in *weight and moment*, as a *Camel* is than a *Gnat* in *bulk*. Since therefore Moral Goodness is always mentioned as the great Character of God's *Favourites*, and the neglect of it out of a pretended Zeal to the *positive duties of Religion* is always recorded as a mark of the most odious *Hypocrites*; this is a sufficient Argument how high a *Value* God sets upon the *Moralities of Religion*.

VI. And lastly, Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the *principal* Part of Religion, is, that at the great *Account* between God and us, his main *Inquisition* will be concerning such Actions as are *morally* good or evil. For so *Rom. ii. 6.* We are told that God will render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Honour and Glory, and Immortality, eternal Life. But to them who are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Tribulation and Wrath, Indignation and Anguish. And accordingly Enoch as he is quoted by St. Jude, ver. 14, 15. declares this to be the Occasion of the Lord's coming with Thousands of his Saints, viz. to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard Speeches, which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him; all which are Matters of Fact against the eternal Rules of Morality. And our Saviour himself in that popular Scheme and Description he gives of the Proceedings of the Day of Judgment, plainly declares that one of the principal Matters he will then enquire into, will be our Neglect or Observance of that great moral Duty of Charity towards the Poor and Needy, *Matt. xxv. 3, 46.* Which is a plain Evidence that our obeying or disobeying the eternal Laws of Morality, is that by which we do most please or displease God; since it is upon this that he will most insist in his final Arbitration of our eternal Fate. For since his last Judgment is only the final Execution of his Laws, we may be sure that whatsoever it is that he will principally

cipally insist on in his *Judgment*, that is the *principal* Matter of his *Laws*. And now having sufficiently proved the *Truth* of the Proposition, I proceed to the *Reasons* of it; upon what *Accounts* it is that God hath made moral Goodness the main and principal Part of our Religion. The chief Reasons of which are these four.

First, Because it is by moral Goodness that we do most *honour* him.

Secondly, Because it is by this that we do most *imitate* him.

Thirdly, Because it is by this that we advance to our own *Happiness*.

Fourthly, When all our *positive* Duty is ceased, *this* is to be the *eternal* Work and Business of our Nature.

I. God hath made moral Goodness the *principal* Part of our Religion, because it is by this that we do him the greatest *Honour*. It is an excellent saying of *Hierocles*, Τιμὴν ποιεῖται τῷ ἀνευδεῖς ἡ τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου προτεινομένων ἀγαθῶν ὑποδοχή· ἔ γὰρ τιμήσεις τὸν Θεὸν δίδες τι αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἄξιόν τῷ λαβεῖν τὰ παρ' ἐκείνου γινόμενα, *the best Honour we can do to a self-sufficient Being is to receive the good Things he holds forth unto us; and therefore it is not by giving to God that you honour him, but by rendring yourselves worthy to receive of him; for, saith he, "Ὅστις τιμᾷ τὸν Θεὸν ὡς προσδεόμενον, ἔτι λείπεται οἰόμενος ἑαυτὸν τῷ Θεῷ εἶναι κρείττονα, i. e. Whosoever gives Honour to God as to one that wants, doth not consider that he thereby sets himself above God. For by his own Self-sufficiency he is infinitely removed above all Capacity of Want, and so can never need any additional Contributions of Glory and*

Happiness from his Creatures. For *Glory* being nothing else but the *Resplendency* of Perfection, which always *reflects* its own Beams upon itself, where-ever there is *infinite* Perfection (as to be sure there is in the Nature of God) there must an *infinite* Glory proceed from it; and therefore being infinitely glorious in *himself*, it is impossible that any thing we do should add any *further* Glory to him. So that if we would truly *honour* and *glorify* him, it must not be by *giving* to, but by *receiving* from him. Now the best thing we can receive from God is *Himself*; and Himself we *do* receive in our strict *compliance* with the eternal Laws of Goodness. Which *Laws* being *transcribed* from the *Nature* of God, from his own *eternal* Righteousness and Goodness, we do by *obeying* them, derive *God's* Nature into *ours*. So that while we write after the *Copy* of his Laws, we write out the *Perfections* of his *Being*; and his Laws being the *Seal* upon which he hath *engraven* his Nature, we do in obeying them take *Impression* from him and *stamp* his blessed Nature on our own. For all those virtuous Dispositions of mind which we acquire by the Practice of Virtue, are so many genuine *Signatures* of *God*, taken from the *Seal* of his *Law*, and *Participations* of his *Nature*. For so Holiness which consists in a *Conformity* of Soul with the eternal Laws of Goodness, is in Scripture called the *Signature* or *Impression* of the *Spirit* of *God*, whereby we are *sealed* unto the day of *Redemption*, Ephes. iv. 30. and such as *do righteousness*, are said to be *born of God*, 1 John ii. 29. which implies their *deriving* from him who is their *Divine* Parent, a *Divine* and

God-like Nature, even as Children do their *human* Nature from their *human* Parents. So that by the Practice of moral Goodness we receive from God the *best* Thing he can bestow, *viz*, a *Divine* and *God-like* Nature ; and consequently by so doing, we render him the *highest* Honour and Glory. For since we can no *otherwise* honour him but by *receiving* from him, we doubtless do him the *greatest* Honour when we receive *Himself*, by *partaking* of the Perfections of *his* Nature, which are the greatest Gift he can communicate to us. *Herein*, saith our Saviour, *is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8. Μόνος γὰρ οἱ δὲ τιμᾶν ὁ προηγουμένως ἱερεῖον ἑαυτὸν προσάγων, saith the aforementioned Philosopher, *i. e.* he only knows how to honour God who presents *himself* a *Sacrifice* to him, *carves* his own Soul into a *divine Image*, and *composes* his Mind into a *Temple* for the Entertainment of God, and the Reception of the divine Light and Glory. It is then therefore that we best *honour* God, when by the Practice of true Godliness we *conform* our Wills and Affections to him ; and *derive* into ourselves *his* Nature and Perfections ; and should you erect to him a Temple more magnificent than *Solomon's*, and load his Altars with *Hecatombs* of Sacrifices, and make it perpetually ring with *Psalms* and resounding *Choirs* of *Hallelujahs*, it would not be comparably so *great* an Honour to him, as to convert your own Souls into *living* Temples, and make them the *Habitations* of his Glory and Perfections. For he *values* no Sacrifices like that of an *obedient* Will, *delights* in no Choir like that of *pure* and *heavenly* Affections, nor hath he in all
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his Creation an Ensign of Honour so truly *worthy* of him, as that of a *Divine* and *God-like* Soul; a Soul that *reflects* his Image, and *shines back* his own Glory upon him. Wherefore since it is by the Practice of moral Goodness that we *receive* God, and *copy* his Nature into our own, it is no wonder he should make it the *principal* Part of our Duty. For how can it be otherwise expected but that he should exact that *chiefly* of us, which *most* conduces to his own Glory. Since then nothing we can do can conduce to his Glory but only our *receiving* Benefits from him, and since no Benefit we receive from him can so *much* conduce to it as our receiving *Himself*, and since we can no *otherwise* receive himself but by *practising* that Goodness which is the Perfection of his Nature, we must *hereby* doubtless render him the greatest Honour and Glory.

II. God hath made moral Goodness the *principal* Part of our Duty, because it is by this that we do most truly *imitate* him. For so you find in Scripture, that every where God is proposed to us for a *Pattern* of Action, it is by some Act or other of *Morality* that we are required to *transcribe* and *imitate* him. So 1 Pet. i. 16. *Be ye holy, for I am holy*; and Luke vi. 36. *Be ye merciful as your father is merciful*; and Matt. v. 48. *Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect*. And indeed it is *only* in moral Goodness that God *can* be the Pattern of our Imitation; as for those Perfections of his which for Distinction-sake we call *Natural*, viz. his *Omniscience* and *Omnipresence*, *Omnipotence* and *Eternity*, they are all beyond the *Sphere* of our Imitation, and therefore were never
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proposed to us as the *Copies* of our Actions. But as for his *moral* Perfections, viz. his *Goodness*, and *Righteousness*, and *Purity*, and *Mercy*, they are the fundamental *Rules* and *Standards* of all moral Action. For the Nature of God, as it is infinitely *good* and *righteous*, is the eternal *Fountain* whence all the Laws of Morality are derived; and all those moral Precepts by which he governs his rational *Creation*, are only so many *Exemplifications* of the moral Perfections of his own Nature. For the *Holiness* of God, which comprehends all his natural Perfections, consists in that *essential Rectitude* of Nature, whereby he always *chooses* and *acts* conformably to the Dictates of his own *infallible Reason*; and it is to this Rectitude of *choosing* and *acting* that all his moral Laws do *oblige* us. For moral Laws are only the *Dictates* of *Right Reason* prescribing us what to *do*, and what to *avoid*; so that in our Compliance with them, we follow the Rule of God's *own* Will and Actions, and thereby *imitate* the eternal Rectitude of his Nature. For though in those different *States* and *Relations* of God and Creature, *right Reason* cannot be supposed to oblige *him* and *us* to all the same *particular* Choices and Actions, yet it obliges us both to act *reasonably* in our respective States and Relations; it obliges *God* to act *reasonably* and as it becomes the State and Relation of a *God* and *Creature*; and it obliges *us* to act *reasonably* and as it becomes the State and Relation of *Men* and *Creatures*. And as for God, *He* is *invariably* inclined to do all that *right Reason* obliges him to, by the *essential Rectitude* of his own Nature; and herein consists all his *moral Perfection*,

tion, which is nothing else but the *immutable* Inclination of his Nature to do whatever is *just* and *good* and *reasonable*. So that while we live according to the *Dictates* of *Reason*, or, which is the same thing, the *eternal Laws* of Morality, we *trace* and *imitate* the moral Perfections of God; and in *our* Place and Station, live at the same Rate and by the same Rule, that *He* doth in *his*. We do what God himself *would* do, if he were in *our* Place, and what the Son of God *did* do when he was in our Nature; and there is no other Difference between *his* Life and *ours*, but what necessarily arises out of our different States and Relations. Since therefore moral Goodness is an *Imitation* of God, it is no wonder that he so much prefers it *before* all other Matter of Duty. For he must needs be supposed to love *that* above all Things, which is the true *Copy* and *Image* of those Perfections of his Nature, for the sake of which he loves *Himself* above all. For he loves himself not merely because he is *Himself*, but because he is in all Respects *morally good*, and his *Will* and *Power* are perfectly compliant with the *infallible* Dictates of his own *Reason*; and hence arises his infinite *Complacency* in himself, that there is nothing in him but what his own Reason perfectly *approves*, no *Inclination* in his Will or Nature but what is exactly agreeable to the fairest *Ideas* of his own Mind. And since it is for his own *Goodness-sake*, that he loves himself as he doth, we may be sure that there is nothing *without him* can be so dear to him, as *that* in us which is the *Image* of his Goodness. Every like, we say, loves its like, and *the righteous Lord*, saith the Psalmist,

Psalmist, *loveth Righteousness*, Psal. xi. 7. *i. e.* being righteous *himself*, he loves Righteousness in *others* by an invincible *Sympathy* of Nature. His *greatest* Heaven and Delight is in his own most righteous Nature, and *next to that* in righteous Souls that *imitate* and *resemble* him. Ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς τόπον οἰκειότερον ἐπὶ γῆς θεὸς ἐν ἔχει: God hath not a more grateful Habitation upon Earth than in a pure and virtuous Mind; εὐσεβείῳ δὲ βροτοῖς γάνυμαι τόσον ὅσον ἐλύμπῳ, saith Apollo, that Mimick of God by his Pythian Oracle, *i. e.* I rejoice as much in pious Souls as in my own Heaven. Which is much what the same with that gracious Declaration that God himself makes by the Prophet *Isaiah*, lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Since therefore moral Duties are all but so many Copies and Exemplifications of God's Nature, this is sufficient Reason why he should prefer them before all the Positives of Religion.

III. God *principally* requires moral Goodness, because 'tis by the Practice of this that we advance to our own natural Happiness. For the natural Happiness of reasonable Creatures, consists in being entirely governed by right reason; *i. e.* in having our Minds perfectly informed what it is that right Reason requires of us, and our Wills and Affections reduced to an entire Conformity thereunto. And this is the Perfection of moral Goodness, which consists in behaving ourselves towards

towards God and *ourselves* and all the *World* as right Reason *advise*s, or as it *becomes* rational Creatures placed in our Circumstances and Relations. And when by practising all *that* true *Piety* and *Virtue* which moral Goodness implies, we are perfectly *accomplished* in our Behaviour towards God, ourselves, and all the World, so as to render to each without any *Reserve* or *Reluctancy* what is *fit* and *due* in the Judgment of right Reason, we are arrived to the most *happy* State that a reasonable Nature can aspire to. 'Tis true, in this Life we cannot be *perfectly* happy; and that not only because we live in *wretched* Bodies that are continually liable to *Pain* and *Sickness*, but also because we are imperfect *ourselves*, and have none to converse with but *imperfect* Creatures. But were we once stript of these *natural* and *moral* Imperfections, wheresoever we lived we should *necessarily* be happy. Were I to live *alone*, without this *painful* Body, I should necessarily be in a *great* measure *happy* while I followed right Reason, though I lived in the *darkest* Nook of the Creation. For there I should still *contemplate* God, and while I did so, my Mind would be always *ravished* with his Beauty and Perfections; *there* I should most *ardently* love him, and whilst I did so, I should *sympathize* and *share* with him in his Happiness; there I should still *adore* and *praise* him, and while I did so, I should feel myself continually *drawn up* to him; and *wrap'd* into a real Enjoyment of him; *there* I should be *imitating* his Perfections, and while I did so, I should enjoy an *unspeakable* *Self-satisfaction*, perceiving how every moment I grew a
more

more *Divine* and *God-like* Creature ; *there* I should intirely *resign* up myself to his heavenly *Will* and *Disposal*, and while I did so, I should be perpetually *exulting* under a joyous Assurance of his *Love* and *Favour* ; in a word, *there* I should firmly *depend* upon his *Truth* and *Goodness*, and while I did so, I should be always *triumphing* in a *sure* and *certain* Hope of a happy Being for ever. Thus were I shut up all *alone* in an *unbodied* State, and had none but God to converse with, by behaving myself towards *him* as right Reason directs me, I should always enjoy him, and in that Enjoyment should be always Happy. And if while I thus behaved myself towards God, I took care at the same time to demean myself towards myself with that exact *Prudence* and *Temperance* and *Fortitude* and *Humility* which right Reason requires, I should hereby create another *Heaven* within me ; a Heaven of *calm* Thoughts, *quiet* and *uniform* Desires, *serene* and *placid* Affections, which would be so many *ever-flowing* Springs of *Pleasure*, *Tranquility* and *Contentment* within me. But if while I thus enjoyed God and myself, by behaving myself as right Reason directs, I might be admitted to live and converse among perfect Spirits, and to demean myself towards them with that exact *Charity* and *Justice* and *Peaceableness* and *Modesty* which right Reason requires, the Wit of Man could not conceive a true Pleasure *beyond* what I should *now* enjoy. For now I should be possesst of every thing my utmost *Wishes* could propose of a good God, a *God-like*, joyful and contented Soul, a peaceable, kind and righteous Neighbourhood ; and so all *above*, *within* and *without* me, would be

a pure

a *pure* and *perfect* Heaven. And indeed when I have *thrown off* this Body, and am *stripp'd* into a naked Ghost, the only or at least the greatest Goods my Nature will be capable of enjoying, are *God, myself, and blessed Spirits*; and these are no otherwise *enjoyable*, but only by Acts of Piety and Virtue, without which there is no good thing beyond the Grave that a Soul can taste or relish. So that if, when I go to seek my Fortune in the *World of Spirits*, God should thus bespeak me, “ O Man, now thou art leaving all these Enjoyments of *Sense*, consult with thyself what will do thee *good*, and thou shalt have whatsoever thou wilt ask to carry with thee into that *spiritual* State; I am sure the utmost I should crave would be this, “ Lord give me a Heart *inflamed* with Love, and *winged* with Duty to thee, that thereby I may but enjoy *thee*; give me a *sober* and a *temperate* Mind, that thereby I may but enjoy *myself*, give me a *kind*, a *peaceable*, a *righteous* Temper, that thereby I may but enjoy the sweet society of *blessed Spirits*; O give me but these blessed Things, and thou hast *crowned* all my Wishes, and to Eternity I will never crave any other Favour for myself but only this, that I may *continue* a pious and virtuous Soul for ever; for while I continue so, I am sure I shall enjoy all spiritual Good, and be as happy as *Heaven* can make me. So that the main Happiness you see of Human Nature consists in the *Perfection* of moral Goodness; and it being so, it is no wonder that the good God, who above all Things *desires* the Happiness of his Creatures, should above all Things *ex-*
act

act of us the Duties of Morality. He knows that our *supreme* Beatitude is founded on our *Piety* and *Virtue*, and that out of our free and constant, sprightly and vivacious Exercise of *these* arises all our Heaven both *here* and *hereafter*; and knows this, that *tender* Love which he bears us, that *mighty* Concern which he hath for our Welfare makes him thus *urgent* and *importunate* with us. For he regards our *Duty* no farther than it tends to our *Good*, and values each Act of our *Obedience* by what it contributes to our *Happiness*; and it is therefore that he prefers *moral* Duties above *positive*, because they are more *essential* to our eternal Welfare.

IV. And lastly, God *principally* requires of us moral Goodness, because when all *positive* Duty is ceased, *this* is to be the eternal Work and Exercise of our Natures. For moral Good is *from everlasting to everlasting*, its Birth was elder than the World, and its Life and Duration runs parallel with Eternity; before ever *the Mountains were brought forth* it was founded in the Nature of God, and as an inseparable *Beam* of his all comprehending Reason it *shines* from one end of the World to the Other. For as soon as ever there was a rational Creature *in being*, the Obligation of Morality laid hold on him, before ever any *positive* Duty was *imposed*; and as long as ever there *remains* a rational Creature, the Obligations of Morality will *abide* on him, when all positive Duty is *expired*. For moral Obligations are not founded like positive ones upon *mutable* Circumstances, but upon firm and everlasting Reasons; upon Reasons that to all *Eternity* will carry with them the

same force and necessity. For as long as we are the Creatures of an *infinitely perfect* Creator, it will be as much our Duty as it is now, to *love* and *adore* him; as long as we are *reasonable* Creatures it will be as much our Duty as it is now, to submit our *Will* and *Affections* to our *Reason*, and as long as we are related to other reasonable Creatures, it will be as much our Duty as it is now, to be *kind* and *just* and *peaceable* in all our Intercourses with them. So that these are but Duties as no Will can *dispense* with, no Reason *abrogate*, no Circumstances *disannul* or *make void*; but as long as God is what he *is*, and we are what we *are*, they *must* and *will* oblige us. So that what the Psalmist saith of God, may be truly applied to moral Goodness, *the Heavens shall perish, but thou shalt remain, they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded up and changed, but thou art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, and thy years shall have no end.* But as long since the *positive* Parts of the *Jewish* Religion were *cancelled*, and *repealed*, the Vail of the Temple *rent in twain*, the Temple itself *buried* in Ruins, and all its Altars *thrown down* and their Sacrifices *abolished*, whilst the moral Parts of that Religion still stand *firm* as the everlasting Mountains about *Jerusalem*; so the time will come when the *positive* Parts of *Christianity* itself must *cease*, when Faith must be *swallowed up* in Vision, and Sacraments be *made void* by Perfection, and all the stated times and outward Solemnities of our Worship, *expire* into an everlasting Sabbath; but then when all this *Scene* of things is quite *vanished* away; Piety and Virtue will still keep the *Stage*, and be the everlasting

Exercise

Exercise of our glorified Natures. For as I shewed before, all *positive* Duty is instituted in suberviency to *moral*, and like a Scaffold to a House is only erected for the *Convenience* of Building up this everlasting Structure of Morality; and when this is once *finished*, must be all taken down again as an unnecessary *Incumbrance* that now only *hides* and *obscures* the Beauty of that Heavenly Building that was raised *on* it, and shall abide *without* it for ever, to entertain our Faculties through all the future Ages of our Being, and to be the everlasting Mansion of our Natures. Wherefore since positive Duties must all *cease* and *expire*, and only moral Goodness is to be our Business for *ever*, it is no wonder that God, who is so good a *Master*, takes so much Care in this short *Apprenticeship* of our Life to train us up in that which is to be our *Trade* for ever. He knows it is upon Piety and Virtue that we must *live* to Eternity, and maintain ourselves in all our Glory and Happiness; and that if when we come into the invisible World we have not this blessed Trade to *subsist* by, we are *undone* for ever; and therefore out of a tender regard to our Welfare, he makes it his *principal* Care to *train* us up in this everlasting *Business* of our Natures.

What then remains but that *above* all things we take care to apply ourselves to the Practice of moral Goodness: To contemplate, and love, and adore, and imitate, God; to depend upon him, and resign up ourselves to his Disposal and Government; to be sober and temperate in our Affections and Appetites, and just, and charitable, and modest, and peaceable, towards one another. These

are the *great* things which God requires at our Hands, and without *these* all our Religion is a fulsome Cheat. It is true the *positive* Parts of Religion are our Duty as well as these, and God by his Sovereign Authority *exacts* them at our Hands; and unless when Jesus Christ hath been sufficiently proposed to us we do sincerely *believe* in him, unless we strike Covenant with him by *Baptism*, and frequently renew that Covenant in the *Lord's Supper*; unless we diligently attend on the *Publick Assemblies* of his Worship, and use an honest Care to avoid *Schism*, and to persist in *Unity* with his true Catholick Church, there is no pretence of Morality will bear us out when we appear before his dread Tribunal. But then we are to consider that the proper Use of all these *positive* Duties is to *improve* and *perfect* us in *moral* Goodness; and unless we use them to this effect, we shall render them altogether *void* and *insignificant*. Wherefore as we would not lose all the *Fruits* of our positive Duties, let us take care to extend them to their utmost *Design*, to improve our *Sacrifice* to *Obedience*, our *Sacraments* to *Gratitude* and *Love*, our *Hearing* to *Practice*, our *Prayer* to *Devotion*, and our *Fasting* to *Humility* and *Repentance*. For if we rest in these Duties and go no farther, thinking by such short Payments to *Compound* with God for all those Debts we owe to the eternal Laws of Morality, we miserably *cheat* and *besool* our own Souls, which notwithstanding all the Exactness about the *Positives* of Religion are by their own *immortal* Affection still enslaved to the Devil; to whom it is much at one what our outward *Form* of Religion is, whether it be *Christian*

tian or *Heathen* or *Mahometan*, provided it doth not *operate* on our Minds, or give any *Check* to the Current of our depraved Natures. For whether we bow to *God* or to an *Idol*, is all one to the Devil, so long as our Souls remain *Profane* and *Indevout*; whether we Communicate in the Holy *Sacrament* of Christ's Death, or in the impure Rites of *Venus* and *Priapus*, is indifferent to him as long as our Hearts continue *putrid* and *corrupt*, steaming with *unchaste* Desires and Affections; whether we Celebrate the Christian *Festivals*, or the bloody *Saturnals*, or Barbarous *Bacchanalia* is no great matter to him, provided our Minds be but cankered with *Wrath*, and *Malice*, and *Cruelty*, and *Revenge*. These are the *Sinews* of his Government, and the *Bands* of our Allegiance to his Throne; and whilst *they* are preserved, he knows his Kingdom is *safe*, and so long he doth not much regard what our *outward* Religion is. Nay, there is nothing can be a higher Gratification to his Ambition, than to behold *Himself* served in Christ's own *Livery*, and Worshipped in a *Form of Godliness*; by which he hath the pleasure of *dividing* Empires with God, and *ravishing* the better share from him; of beholding his hated Creator *mocked* with the Shell and Outside of a Worshipper, whilst himself is *treated* with the Kernel and Inside. For whilst we continue *wicked* under an outward *Form* of Religion, we do in effect Sacrifice our *Beast* to God, and *ourselves* to the Devil; who above all things loves those unnatural Commixtures of *Hearer* and *Slanderer*, *Worshipper* and *Deceiver*, *Communicant* and *Drunkard*, *Sacrificer* and *Oppressor*; by which we

only *exalt* and *sublimate* Impiety, which never looks so Glorious as when it is *gilded* with Fasts and long Prayers. Wherefore as you will answer it at your eternal Peril, do not *cheat* and *abuse* yourselves with the *Name* and *Shadow* of Religion; lest when you have *superstructed* your Hopes of Happiness on a *rotten* Foundation, it should finally *miscarry* and *sink* underneath you into everlasting Wretchedness and Despair.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Concerning Religion; What it is, and what Things are Necessary for the founding and securing its Obligations.

HAVING in the foregoing Chapter briefly discoursed concerning the *Nature of Moral Goodness*, and shewn that it is the *principal Part of Religion*, it will be requisite in the next Place to *explain* what Religion is, that so from thence we may collect what things are necessary to the *founding and securing* its Obligations, which will be the Subject of the ensuing Chapters.

Religion in the General respects *God* as the *Object and Centre* of all its Acts and Offices. For upon Supposition; that there is such a Being as a *God*, and that there are such Beings as *unreasonable Creatures*, or *capable Subjects* of Religion, it will necessarily follow that there must be some *Religion* or other to tie and oblige *these* Creatures to *that God*. For by *God* we mean a Being that hath all *possible Perfection* in him, and is the *supreme Cause and Fountain* of all other Being and Perfection; and such a Being we must needs acknowledge doth not only *deserve* the worthiest Acts of Religion, that *reasonable* Creatures, who alone are capable of understanding his *Wrath*, can render to him, but hath also an unalienable

Right to *exact* and *require* them; and that not only upon the Account of his own essential *Desert* (for whatever he *deserves* he hath a right to *demand*) but also upon Account of the *Right* he hath to reasonable Creatures, who owe their *Beings* to him and all their *Capacities* of serving him, and so cannot dispose of themselves without manifest Injury to him *contrary* to his Will and Orders. By *reasonable Creatures* we mean Beings that are *derived* from God, and are *endowed* by him with a Capacity of understanding *him* and *themselves*; and such Creatures must necessarily stand *obliged* to render him such Acts as are *suitable* to, and *due* Acknowledgments of the *Perfections* of his Nature and their own *Dependence* upon him; and this *Obligation* is that which we call *Religion*. Which word, according to *Lactantius*, *lib. 4. Divin. Institut. c. 28.* is derived a *re-ligando*, from *binding* or *obliging* us to God. So that *true Religion in the general is the Obligation of reasonable Creatures to render such Acts of Worship to God as are suitable to the Excellency of his Nature and their Dependence upon him.* Which Definition includes both the *Doctrines* and *Duties* of Religion. For the *Doctrines* are the *Reasons* by which it obliges us to the Duties: And as there is no Duty in Religion but what derives its *Tie* and *Obligation* from some *Doctrine contained* in it, so there is no *Doctrine* in Religion but what *ties* and *obliges* us to some Duty that is *enjoined* in it. When therefore I call Religion an *Obligation*, I conclude in that term all those *Doctrines* of it concerning God, his Nature, and his

his *Transactions* with his Creatures, which are the *Reasons* by which we stand obliged to render all Acts of Worship to him. But for the better understanding of the Nature of true Religion, it is necessary we should distinguish it into *natural* and *revealed*. By *natural* Religion I mean *the Obligation which natural Reason lays upon us to render to God all that Worship and Obedience, which upon the Consideration of his Nature and our Dependence upon him it discovers to be due to him.* For God having planted in us a *rational* Faculty, by the due *Exercise* of which we are naturally led into the Belief of his *Being*, the Sense of his *Perfections* and the Acknowledgment of his *Providence*, he expects we should follow it as the *Guide* and *Directory* of our Lives and Actions; and whatsoever this Faculty doth *naturally* and in its *due* Exercise dictate to us, is as much the *Voice of God* as any *Revelation*. For whatever it *naturally* dictates, it must dictate by *his* Direction who is the Author of its Nature, and who having framed it to speak *such* a Sense and pronounce *such* a Judgment of Things, hath thereby put *his* Word into its Mouth, and doth *himself* speak through it as through a standing *Oracle* which he hath erected in our Breast on purpose to *convey* and *deliver* his own Mind and Will to us. So that whatsoever natural *Reason* rightly exercised teaches us concerning God and our Duty towards him, is true *Religion*, and doth as effectually *bind* and *oblige* us to him as if it had been immediately *revealed* by him. It teaches us that God is infinitely *wise* and *just* and *powerful* and *good*; that he is the *Fountain* of our Beings, the *Disposer* of our Affairs, and the

the *Arbitrator* of our Fate both here and hereafter; and by these Doctrines it obliges us to *admire* and *adore* him, to *fear* and *love* him, to *trust* and *obey* him. And this is *natural Religion*, which consists of such Doctrines as *natural Reason* teaches us concerning *God* and his *Nature* and *Providence*, and of such Duties as it *infers* from those Doctrines and *inforces* by them; and all the Doctrines of this Religion upon which it founds its Duties, being *eternal Verities*, as they must necessarily be, being all deduced from the *immutable* Natures of God and Things, all the Duties of it must be *morally*, that is *eternally* good and reasonable, because those Doctrines are the *eternal* Reasons upon which they are *founded*, and by which they *oblige*. So that whatsoever is a Duty of *natural Religion* must oblige *for ever*, because it obliges by an *eternal* Reason, and so can never be *dispensed* with or *abrogated* till the Natures of Things are *cancelled* and *reversed*, and *eternal Truths* are converted into *Lies*.

In short therefore, *natural Religion* hath only *natural Reason* for its *Rule* and *Measure*, which from the Nature of God and Things deduces all those *eternal* Reasons by which it *distinguishes* our Actions into *honest* and *dishonest*, *decorous* and *filthy*, *good* and *evil*, *necessary* and *sinful*. For it doth not *make* them good or evil by *judging* them so, but if it judgeth *truly*, it judgeth of them as it *finds* them; and unless it finds them good or evil *in themselves* upon some *eternal Reason* *for* or *against* them, its Judgment is *false* and *erroneous*. So that the *objective* Goodness or Evil that is in the Actions themselves is the Measure of our *Natural Reason*,

Reason, but our natural Reason judging *truly* concerning them is the Measure of our *Choice* or *Refusal* of them ; for be our Action never so good or evil in *itself*, unless we have some *eternal* Reason *for* or *against* it, we cannot judge it so ; and unless we judge it so, we cannot reasonably *choose* or *refuse* it ; but as soon as ever we have *judged* and *pronounced* it good or evil upon an *eternal* Reason, we stand obliged by that Judgment to do or forbear it. So that right Reason pronouncing such Actions good, and such evil, is the *Law* of Nature, and those eternal Reasons upon which it so pronounces them are the *Creed* of Nature, both which together make *natural Religion*. And by *this* Religion was the World governed, at least the greatest Part of it, for some Thousands of Years ; till by *long* and *sad* Experience it was found too *weak* to *correct* the Errors of Mens *Minds*, and *restrain* the wild Extravagancies of their *Wills* and *Affections* ; and then God out of his great Pity to *lost* and *degenerate* Mankind, vouchsafed to us the glorious Light of *revealed* Religion, which in the *largest* acceptation of it includes all *natural* Religion, as well the *credenda* as *agenda*, the Doctrines as the Duties of it ; both which are contained in that *Revelation* of his Will which God hath made to the World, to which it hath superadded sundry Doctrines and Duties of *supernatural* Religion.

But *strictly* speaking, *revealed* Religion, as it is distinguished from *natural*, consists of such Doctrines and Duties as are knowable and discoverable *only* by *Revelation* ; as are not to be *deduced* and *inferred* by Reasoning and Discourse from any
necessary

necessary or natural Principles, but only depend upon the *Council* and *good Will* of God. And where Things depend entirely upon God's *Will*, and their Being or not Being lies wholly in his *free Disposal*, it is impossible that our natural Reason should ever arrive at the Knowledge of them without some *Revelation* of his Will concerning them. For in such Matters as these, where the Will of God is absolutely *free*, Reason without Revelation hath neither *necessary* nor *probable* Causes and Principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither *certain* Conclusions nor so much as *probable* Guesses concerning them, but must necessarily remain altogether in the Dark till such time as God hath *revealed* to it which Way his Will is *determined*; and of such Matters as these consists all revealed Religion *strictly* so called. For though God hath made *sundry* Revelations of his Will, yet the *subject matter* of them was for the *main* always the *same*; viz. the Doctrines of the *Mediation* of Jesus Christ, and the Duties that are *subsequent* thereunto, which from that Promise which God made to *Adam* upon his Fall, *the Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's Head*, to the last Promulgation of the *Gospel*, hath been the great *Theme* of all divine Revelation. For what else was that Revelation which God made to *Abraham*, *in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, but only the *dawning* of the Gospel? which is nothing but glad Tidings of the *Mediator*. What was the Law of *Moses*, but only the same Gospel *shining* through a *Cloud* of *Types* and *symbolical* Representations; and what are all the succeeding *Prophecies* of the Old Testament but only the same Gospel

Gospel still shining *clearer and clearer*, till at last it broke forth in its *Meridian Brightness*? And were this a proper Place, I think I could easily demonstrate, that from *Adam* to *Moses*, from *Moses* to the *Prophets*, from the *Prophets* to *Jesus Christ*, the main *Scope* and *Design* of all Divine Revelation hath been the gradual *Discovery* of this great Mystery of the *Mediation*. So that revealed Religion was for the *Matter* of it always the *same*, though it was not always revealed with the same *Perspicuity*, but *cleared up* by Degrees from an obscure *Twilight* to a perfect *Day*. Wherefore *Christianity*, which in Strictness is nothing but the *Doctrine of the Mediation*, together with its appendant *Duties*, ought not to be looked on as a *new Religion* of 1600 Years Date, for in Reality it is as *ancient* as the *Fall*, and was *then* preached to *Adam* in that *dark* and *mysterious* Promise; after which it was a little *more* clearly repeated, though very obscurely *still*, in God's Covenant with *Abraham*; and again, after that it was much more *amply* revealed in the *Types* and *Figures* of the Law of *Moses*, which yet like painted Glass in a Window did under their pompous Shew still *darken* and obscure the holy Mysteries within them, which were nothing but the Doctrines and Laws of the Christian Religion. So that *Judaism* was only Christianity *veiled*, and Christianity is only Judaism *revealed*.

Thus the *Religion* of the *Mediator*, you see, was the principal *Subject* of all divine *Revelation*; and this *without* Revelation natural Reason could never have *discovered*, because the whole of it depended upon the *free Will* of God. For whether he would

admit of *any* Mediator or no; whether he would admit his *own Son* to be our Mediator or no; whether he would deposit such inestimable Blessings for us or no in the Hands of our Mediator, was entirely left to his *free* Determination; and there was no *necessary* Cause either *within* or *without* him, no nor any *probable* one neither, that humane Reason could ever have *discovered*, that could *incline* or *determine* him one Way or the other. So that till such time that he *revealed* his Will to us, we were left utterly in the *Dark* as to this Matter, and had no manner of Principles to *argue* from, or so much as to *guess* by. This therefore is strictly the *revealed* Religion as it stands in Opposition to the *natural*. But since together with revealed Religion God hath put forth a *second Edition* of natural, which was almost *lost* and grown out of *Print* through the wretched Negligence and Stupidity of Mankind; and since he hath not only revealed them *together*, but also incorporated them into *one*; Religion, as it is now framed and constituted by this happy *Conjunction* of natural with revealed, may be thus defined, *It is the Obligation of rational Creatures to render such Acts of Worship to God through Jesus Christ as he himself hath instituted, and as are in their own Natures suitable to his Excellencies and their Dependence upon him.* Where by *Acts of Worship*, I do not mean such only as are *immediately* directed to and terminated *upon* God, as all those are which are contained in the first Table of the Decalogue; but all those Acts *in general* which God hath *commanded*, which being performed upon a *religious* Account, that is, out of *Homage* and *Obedience*

to God's Will and Authority, are as *truly* and *properly* Acts of Worship to him as *Prayer* or *Praise* or *Adjuration*.

And now having given this short Account of the Nature of Religion, it will from hence be easy to collect what *Principles* are necessary to the *founding* and *securing* its Obligations; for

First, God being the great *Object* of all Religion, it must be absolutely necessary, in order to our being truly Religious, that we *believe* that God *is*.

Secondly, Religion being an *Obligation* of us to God; that this Obligation may take Effect upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he *concerns* himself about us, and consequently that he *governs* the World by his *Providence*.

Thirdly, Religion obliging us to render all due *Acts of Worship* to him, to *inforce* this Obligation upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he will certainly *reward* us if we *render* those Acts to him, and as certainly *punish* us if we *do not*.

Fourthly, These Acts of Worship which Religion obliges us to, being such as are *suitable* to the Excellency of God's Nature, to enable us to *fulfil* this Obligation it is necessary we should have *right Apprehensions* of the Nature of God.

Fifthly, Religion obliging us to render all these Acts of Worship to God *in* and *through* Jesus Christ,
to

to our performing this it is necessary we should believe in his *Mediation*.

These are the great *Principles* in which all the Obligations of Religion are *founded*; and therefore in order to the thorough *fixing* those *Obligations* upon Mens Minds, it will be necessary before we proceed to the particular Duties which Religion obliges us to, to discourse of these Principles distinctly.

C H A P. III.

*Of the Necessity of believing that God is,
in order to Men's being truly Religious.*

HE that cometh unto God, saith the Apostle, *must believe that God is*, Heb. xi. 6. where by *coming to God* is meant *worshipping him*, that is, expressing our *Veneration* of, and *Affection* to him, by outward and visible *Signs* and *Actions*; and unless our *outward* Actions in Religion proceed from an *inward* Veneration of, and Affection to him, they are not *Worship* but *Mockery*: But how is it possible a Man should inwardly *venerate* God, when he *believes* there is *no* such Being in the World? For how *real* soever any thing may be *in itself*, if we *believe* it is not, it is to us as if it *were* not; and therefore though God doth so *necessarily* exist, as that he cannot *but* be, the very Notion of him implying an *infinite* Distance from *not being*; yet while we *believe* he is not, our Thoughts can be no more concerned about him, than about purchasing an Inheritance in *Utopia*. So that this Proposition that *God is*, is the *prime Fundamental* of all Religion; and if this be *removed*, Religion must *sink*, and all its Sacred Obligations *fly in sunder*. But this is so *self-evident*, that it would be very impertinent to *insist* upon the Proof of it. All that I shall do therefore in pursuance of this Argument, shall be

to endeavour to establish the *Belief* of this *fundamental* Truth upon which all Religion depends ; and that First, by inquiring into, and removing the *Causes* of Men's *Infidelity* in this Matter ; Secondly, by representing the *Folly* and *Unreasonableness* of it. For as for the *Proofs* and *Evidences* of God's *Being*, I shall reserve them till I come to discourse of his *Providence*, where I think there is enough said to satisfy any Man that is not desperately hardened against all Conviction.

S E C T. III.

Of the Causes of Atheism ; shewing the great Absurdity and Unreasonableness of them.

Considering how loudly the Voice of *Nature*, the Consent of *Nations*, and the beautiful *Structure* and *Contrivance* of Things do proclaim the Being of God, one would think it impossible there should be any such Monster as an *Atheist* among reasonable *Beings* ; and indeed it hath been warmly disputed among the Learned, whether there be any such or no ? A Question, which these later Ages have determined in the *Affirmative*, by an *Induction* of too many woeful Instances. But doubtless had Men impartially attended to the *Dictates* of *Reason*, and not delivered themselves up to the *Insatiation* of their *Lusts*, and the inveterate

veterate *Prejudice* of a corrupt *Imagination*, it would have been impossible for so many gross *Absurdities* as Atheism implies, to have entred into their Minds; but when once Men's *Wills* and *Affections* have espoused a Proposition, they will make one Shift or other, be it never so absurd, to impose it on their *Understandings*; and considering how many *Causes* there are leading Men to Atheism who are *predisposed* thereunto, I cannot think an *Atheist* to be so great a *Wonder*. For so long as Men's *Understandings* are led by their *Wills*, and their *Wills* are *biased* with Inclinations to Impiety, they can hardly forbear *wisling* there were no God; and then from *wisling* there were none, to *believing* there is none, will be a very short and easy Transition. Since therefore their Atheism proceeds not so much from the Defect of their *Reason* as from the Fault of their *Wills*, perhaps the most effectual Way to cure it, is rather to *detect* and *remove* those faulty Causes in their *Wills*, than to attempt upon their *Reason* with the *Proofs* and *Demonstrations* of a Deity. And accordingly you see, that when God had once erected this goodly *Theatre* of Beings, and *imprinted* on it so many glorious *Characters* of his own *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, though from time to time he hath wrought *innumerable* Miracles, to reduce Men from *Superstition*, *Idolatry*, and *Wickedness*, yet he never wrought *one* to reduce them from *Atheism*. And indeed to what Purpose should he? it being highly improbable that they who will not be convinced of the Being of God by this *standing* Miracle, the *World*, in which there are so many ample *Demonstrations* of his Being, should

be convinced of it by any *other* Miracles ; for other Miracles are only the *Disorders* and *Interruptions* of Nature ; and certainly the regular *Course* and standing *Order* of Nature, is a much more glorious Evidence of God's *Wisdom* and *Power*, than the most miraculous *Interruptions* and *Disorders* of it. And therefore if Men will be Atheists, notwithstanding God hath imprinted so many *Proofs* of his Being on this visible Creation, it is plain it is not their *Reason* but their *Wills* that make them so ; and if so, to what Purpose is it to urge their Reason with the *Arguments* of God's Being? since if they will not listen to those that are round about them, and are every where to be found in the great *Volume* of Nature, it is highly improbable that even *Miracles* themselves, which are God's peculiar *Arguments* (and are therefore called the *Demonstrations of his Spirit*) should ever be able to persuade them. Wherefore to put a Stop to this *pestilential* Disease, which in these latter Ages hath been so *fatally* propagated among all Degrees and Orders of Men, I conceive the most proper Way is to *discover* and *remove* those Faults in their *Wills* which have such a malevolent Influence on their *Understandings* ; and the principal ones may be reduced to these nine Heads.

I. A perverse *Opposition* of Will to the Will and Nature of God.

II. Superstitious *Misapprehensions* concerning God.

III. Precipitant *Rashness* in *prescribing* to, and *prejudging* the Divine Providence.

IV. Vain

IV. Vain Affections of *Singularity* in Opinion.

V. Custom of *Drolling on*, and *Ridiculing* the most serious Things.

VI. Taking up our Religion or Opinions in Religion, without *Examination*.

VII. Measuring the *Truth* or *Falshood* of Religion by the *Practice* of such as make high *Pre-tences* to it.

VIII. Placing Religion in the little *Opinions* that constitute the *Sects* and *Parties* we are engaged in.

IX. Profane and careless *Neglect* of *Publick Worship*.

I. One great Cause of Atheism is the perverse *Opposition* of Men's Wills to the Will and Nature of God. For the natural Notion which Men have of God is, that he is a most *pure* and *holy* Being, infinitely removed by the Perfection of his Nature from all *Inclinations* that are *contrary* to the Dictates of *right Reason*. And accordingly in all those *Declarations* which he hath made of his Will, they find him expressing an high *Detestation* of all Immorality and Wickedness, and commanding them to abstain from it under the most dreadful *Penalties*, which they know he hath both *Right* and *Power* to inflict when he pleases. Notwithstanding which, presuming on his *Goodness*, and a *future Repentance*, they suffer themselves to be *tempted* and *seduced* into Wickedness; the Pleasure of which *rolls* them on from one Wickedness to another, till their Wills are *captivated* by Custom to inveterate *Habits* of sinning.

So that *now* their *Sense* of God, and of his Almighty Displeasure, being no longer able to *master* the Stubbornness of their Wills, only serves to *fret* and *disturb* them, to raise *Terrors* and *Anxieties* in their Consciences. and therewithal to *im-bitter* the Pleasure of their Sin. For so long as this *Sense* remains alive in their Bosoms, they can never hope to sin *quietly* for it; and it being so, they have no other Remedy but only to part with *that* or their *Sins*. For while they *retain* their Sins, the Belief of a God will grow an intolerable *Vexation* to them, unless by *sophisticating* their Belief with false Notions of Religion they can *temper* into an *amicable* Compliance with their Lusts. And this is usually the Artifice of the *duller* sort of People whose Understandings are more *easily* imposed on, *viz.* to intermingle with their Belief of a God such Notions of Religion as may render it *favourable* and *propitious* to our Lusts. And hence I doubt not sprang most of those *wicked* Doctrines which from time to time have been *foisted* into Christianity, from the Desire which Men have to *accommodate* the Difference between their Consciences and their wicked Wills, and reconcile their natural *Sense* of God to their Sins. But alas, these Artifices are all so *thin* and *transparent*, that it is a hard Matter for Men of Wit to *impose* them on their Understandings; and though they have an equal *good Will* to these wicked Doctrines with the duller sort of Sinners, yet their Reason is too sharp-sighted to be *cheused* and *deceived* by them. And therefore usually they go another way to work, and being sensible that they can never enjoy their Sins in *quiet*, while they are
awed

awed with the *Sense* and *Belief* of a Deity, and yet obstinately resolved that they *will* enjoy them, they have no other Expedient but to muster up all their Wit and Reason to dispute the Belief of a God out of their Minds; and being *stiffly* resolved to persist in their Wickedness, they are obliged by their own *Interest* to wish there were no God to *observe* and *punish* them. And then *facile credunt quod volunt*, they easily believe what they would have, and the *slenderest* Probability will sway their Understanding to vote on the Side of their *Interest* and *Affections*. So that when Men are *resolved* to be wicked, Atheism is their *Interest* and *Refuge*, to which they are many times forced to fly in their own Defence, to avoid the Clamours and Persecutions of their Consciences. Had these Men lived in those good *Pagan* Days wherein they might have *rioted* with Devotion, *sacrificed* to the Gods in drunken Bowls, and *worshipped* in the Arms of a Strumpet, no Men would have been more religious than they; and could they *now* but *compound* the Matter so as that God should let *them* alone to enjoy their *Lusts*, there is no doubt but they would be well enough content to let *him* alone to enjoy his *Being*. But because their Sense of him *frets* and *galls* them, they first grow impatient under it, and then set their Wits at Work to raise Objections against it, and either to *laugh* or *dispute* it out of their Minds. And accordingly *Plato* makes mention of a sort of Atheists οἱς ἀνὰ πρὸς τῇ δόξῃ, τῇ θεῶν ἔργα εἶναι πάντα, ἀκράτειαί τε ἰδονῶν καὶ λυπῶν προσπέσωσι μῦθαι, τὰ ἰσχυραὶ καὶ μαθήσεις ὅξεῖαι παρῶσι; who in consequence of their Opinion, that all Things are void of Gods, have

plunged themselves into Intemperance of Pleasures and Pains, being otherwise Persons of great Memories and quick Understandings, *De Leg. Lib.* 10. But alas, how unreasonable is it in a Matter of such vast Importance for Men to *believe* by their *Interest* and *Affections*! it is true, could Men put out the Sun with *winking*, or extinguish the Nature of Things by an obstinate Disbelief of them, it would be very justifiable for those Men to *believe* there is no God whose *Interest* it is that there *should* be none. But alas, the Natures of Things are *unalterable*, and will be what they *are* whatsoever our *Opinion* is about them. If there *be* a God, there *will* be one, whether we think fit to *believe* it or no; and tho' when the Interest of our Lusts requires it, we may possibly *dispute* ourselves out of the Belief of his Being, yet he is not to be disputed out of his *Being*. We may indeed secure ourselves from the *Dread* of his Vengeance by disputing ourselves into a *Disbelief* of him, but we can never *secure* ourselves by it from the *danger* of his Vengeance. And what a senseless thing is it for a Man to shut his Eyes against an unavoidable Danger, merely for fear of being *frightned* by it; and when he might *shun* God's Vengeance by *dreading* it, instead thereof to shun the *dread* of it? What is this but to set his Reason at work to rock his Conscience asleep, that so he may destroy himself without *Fear* or *Disturbance*?

II. Another great Cause of Atheism is superstitious *Misapprehensions* concerning God; which though they are lodged in the *Mind*, yet are most commonly exhaled from the *Affections*, that like impure Fogs do generally breath up all those Me-

teers that *darken* and *disturb* the Region above. And indeed most of our ill apprehensions of God are *transcribed* and *copied* from our own Affections; which be they never so *irregular*, our own self-love will be apt to celebrate for *Perfections*. And then whatsoever we esteem a Perfection in *ourselves*, we naturally attribute to *God*, who is the Source and Standard of all Perfection; and those Affections of our own Nature which we most injuriously attribute to God, we love or hate in *him* according as we love or hate them in *other Men*. Thus the *fond* and *indulgent*, who are apt to *doat* upon others without reason, and to *bug* even their Vices and Deformities, are prone to attribute their own Temper to God, and to look upon him as a Being that is infinitely *indulgent* to those whom *without* any reason he hath *chosen* for his Favourites. And because he who is fond of *others*, loves others should be fond of *him*, to be sure he will love his *fond* God too, and be far more devoutly affected towards the *Idol* of his own Temper, than to the *true* God himself cloathed in all the native Glory of his own Attributes. But on the contrary, those who are *stern*, and *peevish*, and *implacable*, can by no means indure their own Temper in *others*; and therefore it is no wonder if they hate it in *God* to whom they are wont injuriously to attribute it. For how is it possible for them to *affect* a Divinity whom they have pictured in their own Minds with such a *stern* and *terrible* Aspect, with an *Imperious* Self-will that bears down all things before it, by *irresistible* Might, without any Respect to *Right* or *Wrong*, with *bloody* Hands and a *Vengeful* Heart,
and

and a *testy*, *peevish*, and *unaccountable* Nature that *loves* and *hates* without any reason, and is *pleased* or *displeased* as the *toy* takes it. And having thus set up such a *grim* Idol of God in their Minds as they can by no means affect, they secretly *wish* there were no such Being, which is the *brink* of Atheism. Thus their ghastly Apprehensions of God meeting with the *surly* and *churlish* temper within them, instead of moulding them into Devotion to him, commonly *enrage* and *canker* them with Malice against him; and accordingly *Plutch* well observes, 'Ουκ οἶεται θεὸς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ καὶ δεισιδαιμόνων ἔβλεται, *i. e.* the Atheist *thinks* there is no God, and he who hath dreadful Apprehensions of him *wishes* there were none; and he who *wishes* there were none is but one remove from *believing* there is none.. Thus you see in what a direct Line *Vice* leads to *Superstition*, and *Superstition* to *Atheism*. For *Pride* and *Wrath*, *Malice* and *Revenge*, are naturally apt to ingender in Men's Minds *horrid* and *frightful* Apprehensions of God; which working on those *sour* and *rugged* Passions that begot them, are as apt to *exasperate* and *inrage* them against him; and then their *Reason* immediately takes part with their *Passion*, and to gratify its *wish* that there were no God, sets itself industriously to *argue* him out of his Being. But alas, what an unreasonable Procedure is this, for Men to *pin* their Faults upon God, and dress him in their own Deformities, and when they have thus *disguised* him by putting upon him their own frightful Tempers, as the old Persecutors did the Christians by wrapping them in Lions Skins, to set on their Wit and Reason to *worry* him out of

of his Being ; what is this but to make a God as the Heathens did their *Mercuries*, and then fling Stones at him ; to transform him into a *monstrous* Idol, and then *dislike* him, and then dash him in pieces ? but be not deceived, God will be what he is, a most *perfect*, *glorious*, and *amiable* Being, how inglorious soever he may appear to you thro' the false *Medium* of your own Diabolical Temper, which like *Crimson coloured* Glass, will represent the fairest Objects to you *bloody* and *terrible* : But for you to hate God for no other reason but because our own hateful Passions do reflect to you such an inglorious Idea of him, and then to *deny* him because you *hate* him, is equally *impious* and *unreasonable*.

III. Another great cause of Atheism is *Rashness* and *Precipitancy* in *prescribing* to and *prejudging* the Divine Providence, and this also most commonly arises from some great *Irregularity* in Men's Wills and Affections. For generally the *rash* Judgments which Men make of the Divine Providence are grounded on those *unequal* Distributions it makes of the good Things of this World, in prospering the *Bad* and afflicting the *Good*, upon which we are too often ready to charge it with being an *unequal* Arbitrator of Men's Fates : The occasion of which is our *immoderate* Estimation of the Goods and Evils of this World. We so *inbalance* the Goods of it in our Opinions, as to think them *great* enough to be the *Crown* and *Reward* of Virtue ; and have such *horrible* Apprehensions of the Evils of it, as to imagine them *great* enough to be the *Plagues* and *Punishments* of the most *obstinate* and *notorious* Offenders.

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Whereas by the whole Course of his Providence it appears that God hath a different esteem of them *both*; that he thinks the *best* things of this World to be *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the most despicable Persons; and therefore to express his Scorn of these *admirable* Vanities, he many times scatters them with a *careless* Hand, as not thinking it worth the while to be so *exact* in the Distribution of them, as to put them in Gold Scales and weigh them out to Mankind by *Grains* and *Scruples*. And as for the *worst* things of this World, he thinks them not so *bad* but that they may be indured without any considerable Damage to the Sufferer; and therefore many times suffers them to befall his own *Favourites*, as not thinking it of Moment enough to interpose his Providence to shield them against their *impotent* Impressions. And upon this difference of Judgment Men too often ground an *inveterate* Quarrel against God; and because they *doat* upon this World, and think the Goods of it *good* enough to be the Portion of good Men, and the Evils of it *bad* enough to be the Punishment of bad, they are angry with God for not being of *their* Opinion, and are ready to *arraign* his Providence, and to conclude that this World is governed by a *blind* Chance that drops her favours at random, as the full plumed Hawk mews her loose Feathers and never cares who stoops to take them up. And this *Ovid* ingeniously acknowledges himself.

*Dum rapiunt mala fata bonos, ignoscite fasso,
Sollicitos nullos esse putare Deos; i. e.*

While I behold ill Fates attend good Men, I am tempted to think there are no Gods.

*Marmoreo Licinus tumulo jacet, at Cato parvo,
Pompeius nullo, quis putet esse Deos?*

The wicked Licinus lies in a Marble Tomb, but Cato in a small one, and Pompey in none, who would think there were Gods?

So also there are others, who beholding themselves in the *flattering* Mirrour of their own self-conceit, are so taken with the Reflections of their own *Merit* and *Excellency*, as that they cannot see how it is possible but that if there *be* a God he must *love* and *reward* them; and therefore if instead of so doing, God either *deprives* them of those worldly Goods which they *doat* on, or *frustrates* them of those carnal Hopes for whose Accomplishment they have *earnestly* supplicated, they presently begin to murmur against him, and thence proceed to *arraign* the Justice of his Providence, and thence to *deny* both that and his Being. For thus it comes to pass, saith *Simplicius*, that such who have no grounded Belief of a Deity, when they observe the Miseries of *good* Men, and the Prosperities of *bad*, are without any Regard to the common Notions of God, ready to cry out with him in the *Tragedian*, τολμῶ καλεῖπειν μήποδ' ἐκ εἶσιν θεοὶ, κακοὶ γὰρ εὐτυχεῖς ἐπιπλήττεις με, *i. e.* *I dare affirm there are no Gods, because the wicked prosper that hurt me.* Thus from their fond Affection to these worldly Goods, Men frequently take occasion to *quarrel* with God's Providence, for not appropriating them to be the Rewards of Virtue; and being once engaged in a Quarrel
against

against his *Providence*, their next attempt is to dispute him out of his *being*.

But what an unreasonable way of concluding is this? I value this to be best and that to be worst, and therefore God ought to be of *my* Opinion, and to proceed accordingly to his Providence over the World; and there is nothing *can* be better or worse within the Prospect of an infinite Wisdom than what I *apprehend* to be best and worst for Mankind; and therefore if he will do good to the Good, it must be in the Method that I shall prescribe him, that is to say, he must *crown* them with Rose-buds. and *cloath* them in Purple, and *feed* them with the fat of the Land; and if he punish the wicked he must give *me* leave to give aim to his Arrows, and to *direct* him *how*, and *what*, and *when*, and *where* to shoot, and so long I am *contented* to allow him a Being in the World; but if he will presume to cross *my* Opinion of Things, and steer his actions by the unerring Compass of his own infinite Wisdom; if he will rather choose to do good to the Good by *chastening* than by *prospering* them, and to *avenge* himself upon the Wicked by *fattening* them with Prosperity for Slaughter, I shall look upon it as such an Affront to *my* Judgment as will admit of no *meaner* Expiation than the *stripping* him out of his Providence and Being. And what can be more ridiculous than for Man to *deny* the Being of God, because his *Providence* sometimes crosses their foolish Opinion of *Things*, and doth not govern itself by the *crooked* Rules which they are pleased to prescribe it.

IV. Another great Cause of Atheism is vain *Affectation of Singularity* in Opinion; a Vice that hath been always incident to Men of *Speculation*, who valuing themselves upon the Stock of their Knowledge and deep Insight into the Nature of Things, have always affected to start new Notions and *advance* contrary Hypotheses to the received Opinions of Mankind, that so they may be vogue'd for Men of *singular* Knowledge, and seem to have *taller* Understandings than the rest of their Brethren. And this I doubt not hath been one great Cause of *speculative Atheism*; for there is no Principle in Nature which hath been more *universally* received among Men than the Belief of a Deity, which doubtless is the main Reason why Men who affect Singularity have been so prone to *quarrel* at it. It doth not comport with their Design of being thought *wiser* than the rest of the World, to submit their Understandings to *common* Notions and *universal* Doctrines; because should they think as *other* Men do, they might probably be thought no wiser. Perhaps had the Belief of a Deity been *lately* started, and only received by some *singular* Sect of Virtuoso's, these Men might have been as forward to *entertain* it as they are now to *reject* it; but because it is an *old-fashion* Doctrine, in which all Ages and Nations have *concurr'd*, they think it would be a *Discredit* to their Understanding to *wear* it, and therefore they set their Wits at work to invent Atheistical Hypotheses to solve the *Phænomena* of Nature without a Deity. And he that doth but impartially consider the *haughty* Genius of those Philosophers that laid the Foundations of *speculative Atheism*,

theism, may easily perceive that the great Motive of their Infidelity was nothing but a *proud Affectation* of thinking counter to Mankind. And indeed could I but embrace the Doctrine of the *Transmigration* of Souls, I should be tempted to believe, by the *Likeness* of their Humours, that it was one and the same Soul that passed through *Democritus* into *Protagoras*, through *Protagoras* into *Epicurus*, and thro' *Epicurus* into Mr. *Hobbs*: And *since* they so exactly agreed in their *Pride* and haughty *Ostentation* of Knowledge, it is justly supposable that this was the *main Cause* of their *Agreement* in *Atheism*; which being a *singular Doctrine*, and directly contradictory to the *common Notions* of Mankind, was upon that Account more adapted to the Humour of these *arrogant Philosophers*. And accordingly *Plato* describes the *Atheists* of his Age to be a *conceited and scornful* sort of People, and declares the cause of their *Atheism* to be ἀμάθεια μάλα χαλεπή δοκῶσα εἶναι μέγιστη φρόνησις, *a certain pernicious Sort of Ignorance that puts on a Semblance of the greatest Wisdom*: And afterwards he calls *Atheism* τὸν παρὰ πολλοῖς δοξαζόμενον εἶναι σωφώτατον πάντων λόγων, *that which in the Eyes of some conceited People seemed to be the wisest of all Doctrines*, de Leg. Lib. 10. And because these *Atheistical Philosophers*, who were some of them great Masters of Wit and Learning, had the good Luck to be *remarked* and *gazed* on like so many *Anticks* for their Singularity, they have always found *Disciples* and *Followers* among the People of *little Sense* and a *great deal* of *Vanity*, who being ambitious of the *Reputation* of *Wits* and *Philosophers*, but having neither *Brains*

rior *Industry* enough to merit it, are fain to *shelter* their Ignorance in Atheism, and there to face it out with *Laughter* and *Boldness*; and because by laughing at God and Religion they *deride* the common Faith of Mankind, they fancy themselves singularly *witty*, and expect that others should fancy them so to; whereas in reality these *little People* are but mere *Pretenders* to speculative Atheism. For before they can be *more*, they must comprehend the whole System of the Atheistical Philosophy, and be able to describe all those supposed Laws of *Motion*, by which *Matter* without the Conduct of a *superior* Wisdom and Power did originally range itself into this beautiful World, and to shew at least the Possibility of all the strange *Appearances* in Nature, without *supposing* a God; which is such a Task as their *feeble* Understandings durst never attempt; for the utmost they can pretend to is a few Terms of the *Atheistical Philosophy*, which they have learned by *rote*, and do *cant* and *smatter* with as much Skill and Understanding as Parrots do the Lessons they are taught them. And though the brisk young Gentlemen will sometimes *boldly* affirm, and if you dare take them up will lay a *Wager* on it too, that *Reason* is nothing but a *Train of Imaginations*; that *Choice* is nothing, but the *last a Stroke* of outward Object on the *Fancy*; and that there is nothing in Nature but *Matter* and *Motion*; yet should you be so rude as to ask them what they mean by these Phrases, you would *uncase* their Ignorance and utterly *undo* them. So that such as these are only the *Hawkers* and *Retailers* of Atheism, that *noise* and *cry* it about; but have neither Wit nor Indu-

stry enough to *understand* it, but to take it up with the same *implicit* Faith as the Papists do their Religion. Thus as the *Ambition* of being accounted *wiser* than others, causes Men to affect *Singularity* in their Opinions, so the *Affectation* of Singularity in Opinion doth very often transport Men into *Atheism*.

Now tho' I would by no Means plead for Mens *enslaving* their Understanding to *vulgar* Opinions, so as to put a *Stop* to all Advancements of *Knowledge*, and hinder the World from ever growing *wiser*; yet doubtless for Men to *quarrel* at Opinions for no other Reason but *because* they are *vulgarly* received, is not only a rude *Affront* to the Reason of Mankind, but also an effectual Way to involve ourselves in an endless *Labyrinth* of Mistakes. For while I *affect* to be singular in my Opinion, I *deprive* myself of the Assistance of *other* Men's Understandings, and in my Travel for Knowledge chuse rather to go *alone* by myself through *untrodden* By-ways, than to keep the *Road*, and follow the *Track* of those that have gone before me. So that unless I am *wiser* than all the World, which is very *unlikely*, it is a thousand to one but I *bewilder* and *lose* myself; for how *wise* and *sagacious* soever I may be, it is certain that *many* Heads are *wiser* than *one*; and therefore when all Heads *concur* in the same Judgment, it is *probable* at least that that Judgment is *true*: He therefore who rejects an Opinion because *all* or *most* do embrace it, *affects* to think counter to the *strongest* Evidence, and to believe against the *greatest* Probability. It is true in many things the generality of Men have been *mistaken*,
which

which is a sufficient Reason why we should not *pin* our Faith upon the Sleeve of *vulgar* Opinions, but impartially *examine* before we confidently *embrace* them ; but yet there is a Reverence due to the *Judgment of Mankind*, and the Laws of *Modesty* require us not to be *confident* against it without very great Reason ; but to *affect* to run counter to it, especially in such a Matter of Moment as the *Belief or Disbelief* of a Duty, is not only the highest *Arrogance* but the most extravagant *Madness*. For it is at *least* probable that there is a God, because *all* Mankind do *believe* one, and if there *be* one it is of *infinite* Moment that we should *believe* it, and *act* accordingly ; and therefore for Men to turn Atheists out of mere *Singularity*, is not only to believe there is *no* God, because it is probable there *is*, but to *play* and *dally* with one's own Fate, and run the *Hazard* of being eternally miserable out of a *wanton* Affectation of *contradicting* the Judgment of Mankind.

V. Another great Cause of Atheism is Custom of *drolling on* and *ridiculing* the most *serious* Things ; a Humour which hath strangely prevailed in this *pleasant* and *jocular* Age, wherein the wild *Roarings* of Men's Fancies into *odd* Similitudes, *startling* Metaphors, *humorous* Expressions, and *sperative* Representations of Things are grown more acceptable in almost all Conversations, than the most *solid* Reason and Discourse, and it is generally looked upon as a far more *genteel* and *fashionable* Quality for a Man to be *witty* than *wise*. Now though I do not deny but that Wit in itself is a very *useful* and *valuable* Indowment, and serves to many *excellent* Purposes ; as namely to

polish and *adorn* the most serious Truths, and represent them to Men's Minds in the most *comely* and *affecting* Dresses; to *expose* what is apparently *base* and *ridiculous*, and *lash* it with the *Satyrs* it makes against *itself*; to *quicken* and *give Life* to a solid Argument, and render it more *piercing* and *convictive*; and in a Word, to *indear* our Society, and give a *Relish* and *Piquancy* to our Conversation, and to *recreate* our Minds after we have been *tired* and *cloyed* with *severer* Occupations; though Wit, I say, be a very useful Quality as to all those good Purposes, yet unless a *wise* Man hath the *keeping* it, that knows *when*, and *where*, and *how*, to apply it, it is like Wild-fire that flies at *Rovers*, runs *kissing* about, and *blows up* every thing that comes in its Way without any Respect or Discrimination. And indeed the more *grave* and *serious* any thing is, the more *prone* it will be to *expose* and *ridicule* it. For the *Life* of Wit consists in the *Surprisingness* of its Conceits and Expressions, in making such *smart* or *uncouth* Representations of Things as are most apt to raise a *pleasing Wonder* and *Amazement* in those that hear us. Now there is nothing more *surprising* in its own Nature, than to see or hear a *serious* Thing *sportfully* represented and dressed up in an *antick* and *ridiculous* Disguise; the very exposing it in a Garb and Figure so *unexpected* because so very *unlike* and *suitable* to itself, is apt of its own Nature to *surprise* and *amuse* the Spectators or Hearers; which Surprise, if he be a *vain* Person, will *tickle* him in Laughter, but if he be *serious*, will affect him with *Detestation* and *Horror* to see a serious Thing so *contemptibly* treated. But the
greatest

greatest Part of Men being of *vain* and *trifling* Spirits, that are *whiffled* up and down in little *Levities* of Fancy, there is nothing commonly doth more *gratefully* surprise them and provoke their *Laughter*, than *ridiculous* Representations of *serious* Arguments; and hence it comes to pass that it is grown a great Instance of Wit among the Generality of Men to *sport* and *play* with *serious* Things, to *burlesque* the Sense of them, and apply them to *ridiculous* Purposes; wherein in reality this *mistaken* sort of Wit is nothing but *dull* and *impudent* Buffoonry, and a very *little* Wit joined with a *great deal* of Sauciness will enable a Man to make *sport* with the most serious Arguments. For it is but *cloathing* them in *rude* and *portentously* Expressions, or *misconstruing* them to a *profane* or *ludicrous* sense, or *debauching* the phrases by which they are expressed to a *silly* or a *wicked* Meaning, and it shall be presently *cried up* for an excellent Jest, and the Author of it dubbed a Wit *Laureat*. This therefore being so easy a Way for *dull* People to advance themselves to the Reputation of *Wits*, hath of *late Years* especially been mightily frequented by the *impotent* Well-wishers to Wit and Ingenuity; and because *Religion* hath been always esteemed the *most serious* Thing in the World, therefore they fix upon *that* as the common Theme of their *Raillery*, considering that the *more* serious it is, the more it will surprise Men to hear it *burlesqued* and *drolled on*. So that if they do but speak *slightly* and *irreverently* of *God*, or never so *clownishly* ridicule a *Mystery* of Religion, or cloath an *obscene* Thought in a *Text of Scripture*, their *Sauciness* will supply the Defect of their *Wit*,

and Men will laugh not so much at the *Piquancy* of their Conceit, as at the *Boldness* and *Presumption* of it: And because their Discourse hath the *Luck* to be *laughed* at, they think themselves *celebrated* for the *Oracles* of Wit, and are thereby emboldned to *proceed* in their *impious* Buffoonry, till at last they have drolled themselves into a *Contempt* of God, and from thence into downright Atheism. For though a *Jest* be no *Argument*, nor yet a *loud Laughter* a *Demonstration*, yet if you inspect the Generality of our *little Pretenders* to Atheism, you will find *this* is the main Foundation that their Irreligion depends on; for their Gift consists not in *arguing* and *demonstrating*, but in such a *Set* of *sine* Phrases and *terse* Oaths; and all the Stock of Learning they pretend to is a few *Skavings* of Wit gathered out of *Plays* and *Romances*, and these they *pin* upon Religion, as you have seen unhappy Boys do Rags at Men's Backs, to *expose* it to Scorn and Derision; and having accustomed themselves to treat it with such *rude* and *porterly* Contempt and Disingenuity, it grows by Degrees *cheap* and *vile* in their Eyes, and at last is rejected by them as a *ridiculous Imposture*; and if *now* when they are urged with *Evidences* of Religion, they have but Wit enough to answer *Reason* with *Drollery*, and to retort a *Jest* to a *Demonstration*, how *gloriously* do they imagine they have acquitted themselves, and with what *triumphant* Shrugs do they celebrate their Victory over the *little Man in black*.

Now though for Men to *deride* what they do not *understand*, favours neither of *Learning* nor good *Manners*, and is equally unbecoming a *Gentleman* and

and a *Scholar*; and though for a Man to venture to be *damned* for deriding of God and Religion, is such a Triumph of *Wit* as argues the utter Defeat of his *Reason*, yet so long as there are *vain* Men enough to be *tickled* with this profane sort of Drollery, to be sure there will never want *Fools* enough to *venture* on it. For when a *Fop* will needs aspire to the Reputation of a *Wit*, he hath no other way but to dress up Religion in a *Fool's Coat*, and expose it for a Spectacle of *Derision*, and then how *dull* soever the Conceit be, the stupendous *Presumption* of it will *surprise* and *amuse* the Company, and Men will *admire* him, just as they do *Rope-dancers*, for *daring* to *perform* what a wise Man would *tremble* to *attempt*; and being thus emboldned by the *Admiration* and *Laughter* of his Company, which the *vain* Creature mistakes for a *Proof* and *Evidence* of his *Wit*, he grows more *pert* and *confident*, and so *fools* and *fleers* on till he hath *toyed* and *laughed* himself out of all Sense of Religion.

But alas! what a *desperate* Piece of *Folly* is this, for Men thus to *sport* and *dally* with the Almighty, whose Vengeance they can neither *withstand* nor *endure*; to *point* and *make Mouths* at him to his Face, and set him up as the Finger-butt of their *Scorn* and *Derision*! For certainly if there be Sins that can raise a Cry *loud* enough to reach Heaven, *this*, as a great Author of our own hath expressed it, will be so far from *whispering* there, that it will give an *Alarm* to the Vengeance of Heaven, whose Inflictions like Stones tumbling from the Tops of Towers, will by so much the more *fatally* crush those they light on, by how much the *longer* they

are falling upon them. And therefore Men thus to *dally* with their own *Fate*, to *venture* to be *damned* that they may be thought to be *witty*, and expose themselves to endless *Wailing* and *Woe* only to raise a present *Fit of Laughter*, is doubtless a far more desperate Attempt than it would be to play at the Mouths of Cannons while they are spitting Fire, or to lay hold on a Thunderbolt as it comes roaring down from the Clouds.

But suppose there were neither *Evil* nor *Danger* in this impious Practice, yet for Men to conclude there is no God because they have the Confidence to *scorn* and *despise* him, is altogether as *ridiculous* as their despising him is *impious*. For there is nothing in Nature so *real* or *serious* but may be *drolled* and *rallied* on; if a Man will set his Wits at work he may *break jests* upon *Pain*, and entertain his Company with *comical Representations* of the *Groans* and *Agonies* of dying; but it would be a Jest indeed should he *droll* himself into a *Belief* that there are no such Things as *Pain* or *Death*; but alas, Things are not to be altered by *Laughing* at them, and how *merry* soever we may make ourselves with the *Belief* and *Notion* of a Deity, we shall one Day find *in earnest* that he is not to be *jested* out of his *Being*.

VI. Another Cause of Atheism is taking up Religion or Opinions in Religion without *Examination*. The Generality of Men do embrace their Religion as a Part of their *Fate*, as the Temper of their *Clime*, or the Entail of their *Ancestors*; and the Reason why they are *Christians*, is, because Christianity had the Luck to *bespeak* them first, and by its timely Interposure to *prepossess* and *fer-*
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стал them. So that in all probability had *Mahometism* plied them *first*, they would have had as much Faith for the *Alchoran* as they have now for the *Bible*. Now when Men thus take up their Religion they know not *why*, their Minds must needs be left *naked* and *defenceless* to all the Temptations of Atheism. For when a Man can render no *reason* for his Religion, his Faith hath nothing but blind *Prejudice* to support it; and it is with his *Will* that he believes, and not with his *Understanding*; so that he may chuse whether he will believe or no, because he hath no *Evidence* to determine his *Understanding*. And how *unstable* and *insecure* must his Faith needs be, when it hath no other Foundation but a *fickle* and *inconstant* Will; when it lies at the mercy of his *Humour* and *Inclinations*, and it is in his power to determine his Assent to *that* side of the Question which is most for his *Interest*? For now his *Faith* being determined by his *Will*, and his *Will* by his *Interest*, whenever he thinks it his Interest that there *should* be no God, to be sure he will be ready enough to believe that there *is* none; and consequently as soon as he grows wicked enough to *need* Atheism for a *Refuge* from his Conscience, he will betake himself *thither* in his own defence, and endeavour by an obstinate *Disbelief* of God's *Being*, to *shelter* himself from the *Dread* of his *Power*. Thus when Men's Belief is not grounded upon *Reason* and *Evidence*, but stands *tottering* on the fickle Foundation of their *Wills*, it is liable to be *blown down* by every blast of Temptation. And hence I doubt not in a great measure proceeds the *Irreligion* of the Age we live in; for if you survey the present

sent *Sticklers* for Atheism, you will find they chiefly consist of the *hair-brained* and *uncatechised*. Youths of the Town, who never troubled themselves to understand the first *Principles* of Religion, nor to consider the *Dependance* and *Connexion* of its *Doctrines*, and know nothing at all either of the admirable *Contexture* of the *Parts* of it, or of the *Reason* and *Evidence* of the *Whole*. For alas, their Study hath been employed *another way*, viz. in courtly *Forms* of Speech and *Punctilio's* of Action, in *fashionable* Garbs, and Oaths, and *artificial* Luxuries, in *conning* of fine Jests and Modes of Address, and *retailing* Fragments of Wit from Plays and Romances; but as for the *severer* and more *useful* Studies, they bequeath them to the *dull Men* of *Sense* and *Reason*.

Such as *these* for the most part are the *Sages* that *droll* upon Religion, and *make Jests* upon the Scripture; and what wonder is it that such as these turn *Infidels*, who are never able to render any *Reason* of their *Faith*? For how *weak* soever the Arguments of *Infidelity* are, it is a hard case if it cannot *baffle* that Faith which hath no Reason on its side to *guard* and *defend* it; especially when they are *seconded* with a Man's *Lusts* and *Inclinations*, as to be sure the Arguments of Infidelity will always be. For when a Man hath no Reason *for* his Faith, but a great many Lusts *against* it, the *slenderest* shews of *Probability* will suffice to make him an Infidel. But what an horrible Neglect is it for Men that have Reason to *distinguish* between *Truth* and *Falshood*, to take no care to inquire into the *Truth* and *Evidence* of their Religion in which their greatest *Interest* is involved; but to
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wink hard and believe at a venture they know not why nor what? What is this but to cast Lots for their Souls, and throw Cross or Pile for their eternal Salvation? They resolve, they say, to adhere to the Religion of their *Ancestors*, but whether that be true or false they never inquire; so that if it be true, they may thank their *Stars* for it, but if it be false, they have the worse Luck. Thus they wholly commit themselves to the Conduct of Chance to be conducted to *Heaven* or *Hell*, as it happens; and as if those distant Fates were indifferent to them, they concern not themselves to inquire whether the way they are in be the *Broad* or the *Narrow*, the *Right* or the *Wrong*, but even leave the *Event* to determine it. And can any thing in the World be more wild or extravagant, than for Men who are so solicitous about their smaller Concerns, who will not purchase an Acre of Land without examining the *Deeds* and *Evidences* by which the Right to it is Conveyed, thus to take up their Religion upon Trust, and stake their everlasting Fate upon such a desperate Venture? But then for Men to take occasion to despise and reject Religion from their own sottish Neglect to inquire into the Truth of it, is such an height of Extravagance as no *Bedlam* can parallel; it would be as reasonable for a Man to put out his Eyes, and then resolve not to believe there is a Sun in the Firmament, because he doth not see it, or to stop up his Ears, and then peremptorily deny the Being of Sounds, because he does not hear them; for Men thus to graft Infidelity upon Ignorance, is only to heap one Extravagance on another; if they understand not the Evidence of Religion, the more

Shame

Shame it is for them, but methinks it might very well become them to be *modest* and *teachable* till they *do*; and in the mean while to take care to *inform* themselves *better*; but then immediately to leap out of *Ignorance* into *Atheism*, is first to play the *Fool*, and then run *stark mad* upon it.

VII. Another cause of Atheism is Men's measuring the *Truth* or *Falshood* of Religion by the *Practice* of such as make the loudest *Pretence* to it. When a Man is unwilling to undergo the trouble of satisfying his *own Reason* of the Truth of his Religion, his usual Method is to *inquire* what *other* Men think of it, who by the *zealous* Profession which they make, may be supposed to *understand* it better than *himself*; but because Men's Thoughts are *secret* and *invisible*, and do not always *correspond* with their *Words* and *Professions*; therefore to satisfy himself what other Men *think* of Religion, he concludes the safest way is to judge by what they *do*, and not by what they *profess*; and so far indeed he is in the right. For to be sure Men's *Actions* are a much more *certain* Index of their *Thoughts* than their *Words*; and therefore when he sees those who *profess* Religion *act* as if they did not *believe* it, and observes how their *Lords* do run a tilt at their *Practice*, and how *broadly* their Lives *give the Lye* to their Professions, he presently concludes that whatever they pretend they are *Infidels* in their Hearts; and being once persuaded that those whom he thinks do best *understand* Religion do not *believe* it, he thence immediately concludes that they find no *reason* to believe it, and only put on the *Profession* of it as an *Angelical Vizor*. being minded to play the

Devils in it with more *Credit* and *Security*. And by this popular Way of Reasoning they conclude Religion to be nothing but a politick *Device* and *Engine* which wise Men have contrived to *beguile* and *manage* the simple; and that whatsoever is *pretended* for it, it is a mere *Juggling-box* which Knaves play Tricks with to *delude* and *cozen* Fools. And of this Way of Men's reasoning themselves into Atheism, the Age we live in is full of woful Instances; for now-a-days to *scorn* and *despise* Religion is no longer the Prerogative of *Wits* and *Virtuosos*, but the infection is spread and propagated into *Shops* and *Stalls*, and the *Rabble* are become *Professors* of Atheism. Now whence should this proceed? alas, it is not to be supposed that such Persons as these should ever be able to *Philosophize* themselves into Infidelity, and turn Atheists either upon *Aristotle's* or *Epicurus's* Hypotheses; no, no, their Argument lies *nearer home*, and more *open* to their Capacities: They have seen a World of *vile Tricks* played in our Religious *Carnivals* and *Masquerades*; some making their Religion a *Sanctuary* for their *Treasons* and *Rebellions*; others *gilding* over their *Faction* and *Sedition* with a specious Pretence of Zeal for God's Glory: Some prosecuting their own *Revenge* and *Ambition* under the Ensigns of *pure Worship*, and *true Protestant Religion*; others *commuting* for their Excesses of *Riot*, with a clamorous Zeal for *Decency* and *Order*; and others *picking Pockets* with one Hand while they have been *lifting up* the other to Heaven in *Devotion*; the Sight of which hath tempted the *rude* and *unthinking* Vulgar to look upon Religion as a mere *Castle in the Air*, that hath no

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Foundation but in the *Inventions* of Knaves, and in the *Faith* of Fools.

Now though there is no doubt to be made but that these vile *Hypocrites* who have laid this *Stumbling* block in Men's way, shall one Day *dearly* answer for the *Ruin* of those whom it hath occasioned to *fall*, and for thus *exposing* the Credit and Reputation of Religion to the *Misprisions* of those that do not *understand* it ; yet it is a most inexcusable Piece of *Folly* for Men thus to *infer* *atheistical* Conclusions from the ill Example of *hypocritical Professors*. For in the first Place, to conclude a Man an *Infidel* because his Actions *run counter* to the Faith he pretends to, is very *rash* and *fallacious*. For do we not see Men very often act *against* their Consciences, and fly in the Face of their *own* Conventions ? why may we not then as fairly suppose those wicked Actions we argue from to be the Effects of an obstinate Will as of an *Infidel* Judgment ? but suppose it were true that those Men were all *Infidels* that do thus act against their *Faith*, doth it therefore follow that *you* must turn *Infidel* too ? If it be so *unsafe* and so *unworthy* of a Man to carry his Brains in other Men's *Heads*, what a Shame is it to carry them in other Men's *Heels*, and to suffer his Faith to be led by the *Track* of their Examples through all the wild *Mazes* of Irreligion and Atheism ?

But you will say, by these Men's Examples you plainly see what a Mystery of Iniquity there is in *religious Pretences* ; and what then ? must Religion be a *Cheat*, because bad Men *play Tricks* with it, and make it a *Cloak* for their Knavery ? if so, then the best Things in the World are liable to *Suspicion* ;

cion ; because there is nothing so good but what is capable of being prostituted to very ill Purposes. I confess when we see so many *Cheats* acted under the *Masque* of Religion, we have just Reason to call it to a more *severe* Examination, and to enquire more *narrowly* into the Proofs and Evidences upon which it is founded ; but presently to *reject* Religion because *Knaves* and *Hypocrites* make bold to disguise themselves in it, is every whit as *absurd* and *ridiculous* as if Men should deny that there is any such Virtue as *Chastity* in the World, because there are common *Prostitutes* that pretend to it.

VIII. Another Cause of Atheism is *Divisions* and *Schisms* formed out of little Opinions in Religion. For it is natural to Men to place a great Part of their Religion in those Opinions, for whose sake they *divide* and *separate* from each other ; so that if *hereafter* they happen to be dissatisfied with those Opinions of which they are excessively fond at *the present*, they will be under a great Temptation to suspect *Religion itself*, as if that were as ill grounded as those *little Opinions* which they laid so great a *Stress* on, and so after they have run through several *Setts* of Opinions, and in fine have discovered them to be *all* Delusions, they are ready to conclude Religion *itself* to be nothing but a System of *Lies* and *Impostures*. For as weak Heads when they perceive the *Battlements* shake are apt to suspect the *Foundations*, so weak Understandings will be prone to suspect even the *Fundamentals* of Religion, when once they perceive those darling Notions *totter* which they have confidently presumed to *superstruct* thereupon.

And upon this Account I make no doubt but that the Irreligion of this Age is very much to be attributed to the *Seets* and Divisions of it. For how many woful Examples have we of Persons who had once a great *Zeal* and *Satisfaction* in Religion, that upon their *causeless* Separation from the Church's Communion, have run from *Seet* to *Seet*, and from *one* extravagant Opinion to *another*, till at last being convinced of the *Cheats* and *Impositions* of them all, they have totally discarded Religion *itself*, and made their last Resort into *Atheism*. And as separating into Parties upon *little* Differences in Religion exposes the Separatists *themselves* to great Temptations to Atheism, so it doth those also who are *indifferent* on both Sides, and stand engaged on *neither* Part of the Separation. For whilst these Men behold the State of Religion thus miserably *broken* and *divided*, and the Professors of it *crumbled* into so many *Seets* and *Parties*, and each Party spitting *Fire* and *Damnation* at his Adversary, so that if *all* say true, or indeed any two of them in *five hundred* Sects which there are in the World, (and for all I know there may be *five thousand*) it is *five hundred* to one but that every one is *damned*, because every *one* damns *all* but itself, and *itself* is damned by *four hundred and ninety nine* ; so that 'tis a mighty Chance if in so great a Volley of *Anathema's* which every *one* hath levelled at it, any *one* escape : When, I say, unengaged Persons that are not able to distinguish between the *disputable* *Opinions* that constitute these Sects, and the *Necessaries* and *Essentials* of Religion, shall reflect upon this tumult and confusion of Faiths, they will be apt
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will be apt to conclude without farther Enquiry, that Religion itself is nothing but an infinite Maze of *disputable Opinions*, wherein Men wander about in the dark, and *juggle* and *rencounter* one another without any certain Clew on either side to *guide* and *direct* their Enquiries; under which misapprehension they will either damn *all* Religion for a *Cheat*, or *hover* about in eternal *Uncertainty*, not knowing where in so great a Confusion of Religions to *fix* and *settle* their Faith: And hereunto I doubt not is to be attributed a great part of the *Irreligion* of this Age. For while some Men by running themselves out of Breath in pursuit of those *Ignes fatui* or *New-Lights*, that have broken and divided our Communion, have at length quite tired out their Zeal and religious Pretences, and so are at length lain down in the Mire of *Irreligion* and open *Profaneness*; others by looking on and beholding the wild *Divisions* which these new Lights have made, have been tempted to *run away* from Religion itself, as if that were only a *Labyrinth* of uncertain Opinions contrived on purpose to *distract* and *bewilder* Men's Brains.

Now though the Authors of these *Divisions*, whosoever they are, are doubtless highly accountable to God for all that Irreligion which attends them, yet for Men from hence to draw Atheistical Conclusions, is much more imputable to the *Perverseness* of their *Wills* than to the *Weakness* of their *Understandings*.

For in the first Place, what if you have discovered some Opinions in Religion to be *false* and *erroneous*, of the Truth of which you were once very *confident*; doth it therefore follow, that

there is *nothing* certain in *Religion*? If so, you may as well conclude that there is nothing certain in the *Mathematicks* neither, since some Men have been as confident of the Truth of false *Axioms* in *Geometry* as ever you could be of false *Propositions* in *Religion*. That you were once *over-confident* in a disputable Matter was your own *Fault* and *Folly*, but must it therefore follow that *Religion* is a *Cheat*, because you have been rash and inconsiderate? And what tho' you once laid the great *stress* of your *Religion* upon an Opinion which you now discern is erroneous, must *Religion* needs suffer for your mistake, and be branded for an *Impostor* because you took that for *Religion* which was *not*? For there are a thousand *Propositions* about *Religion*, which have been zealously disputed *for* and *against*, which have torn Men into *Sects*, and been the *Religion* of the separate *Communities* they have *formed* and *denominated*, that yet are very remote *Superstructures* on the true *Foundations* of *Religion*, and may be *true* or *false*, *believed* or *disbelieved* without any damage to *Religion*. And therefore before you suspect the *Truth* of *Religion* itself, upon your discovering the *Falshood* of any *particular Opinion*, you ought in all reason to consider whether that Opinion be so *essential* to *Religion* as that it cannot *subsist* without it; for if it be not, 'tis the most unreasonable thing in the *World*, to infer a suspicion of the *Truth* of *Religion* from the *Falshood* of *Propositions* that have *little* or *no* Dependence on it, and to reject the *Gold* and the *precious Stones* for the sake of the *Wood*, and *Hay*, and *Stubble* that have been *superstructed* upon them. And then,

2. What

2. What can be more absurd than for Men to *reject* Religion because Men's *Opinions* about it have been so *divided*? For if you survey the several *Divisions* of Christians, you will find they generally *concur* in all the *necessary* and *essential* Doctrines of Religion, and that the *Opinions* wherein they *divide* are for the most part such *unnecessary* Speculations, as that it is almost *indifferent* to Religion whether they be *true* or *false*: And with what reason can we suspect the Truth of *necessary* Doctrines wherein *all* are agreed, because there are Disagreements in *unnecessary* ones? Because there are some Propositions in the *Mathematicks*, about which the *Opinions* of the Mathematicians are *divided*, shall we therefore suspect the Truth of all those wherein they are *agreed*? For if their *Disagreement* be an Argument of the *Falseness* of the *former*, why should not then their *Agreement* be as good an Argument of the *Truth* of the *latter*? But how much soever Men's *Opinions* about Religion may be *divided*, all that can be thence inferred is, that some Men are *mistaken*; and while some Men judge of Religion by their *Passions* and *Interests*, and others by the *Prejudices* of their *Education*, it is impossible it should be otherwise. But for Men in the midst of such apparent Causes of Difference, to resolve to be of no Religion till all are agreed in *one*, is just as *wise*, and as *rational* as if they should determine not to go to Dinner till all the Clocks in Town strike Eleven together.

IX. And lastly, Another great Cause of Atheism is the *profane* and *careless* Neglect of God's *Publick Worship*. For Men of *Secular* lives, whose

Minds are always engaged in this eternal hurry of *worldly* Affairs, are too prone to forget God, and all their Concerns in *Religion* and *another World*; and even their conversing so much with these *sensitive* Things which are always before them, and are continually *crowding* in upon their Thoughts, doth naturally *indispose* them to exercise their Faculties about *divine* and *spiritual* Objects, and render their Minds *ὀπίσθω βαρεῖς*, *unfit* and *unable* to ascend to the Contemplation of God. And therefore God hath appointed the *stated* Times of Publick Worship, on purpose to withdraw Men from their *secular* Pursuits, that so they may be at leisure to *retire* into themselves, to *recollect* their scattered Thoughts, and awake their Minds to a sense of Piety and Religion; which can by no way so effectually be performed as by the Solemnities of *Publick Worship*, wherein our remembrance of God is not only *refreshed*, and our Piety to him *excited* and *directed* by the publick Instructions, but our natural Sense of Religion is also *actuated* and *intended* by the mutual *Concurrence* and *Example* of each other's Devotion. Thus after our Religion hath been *slackened* by our worldly Cares and Delights, it is daily *wound up* again by the Returns of our Publick Worship, and so the sense of God is still *kept alive* in our Minds. When Men therefore turn their Backs upon the *Publick Worship*, and devote the *holy Seasons* of it to their secular Business or Pleasures, it is not to be wondered at that their sense of a divine Power, which they seldom or never *think of*, should by degrees *decay* and *wear off*, and that *that* being extinguished they should sink into *Irreligion* and *Atheism*.

For

For when once Men have worn out their *Sense* of a Deity, and as the Consequence of that are broke loose from all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Conscience, they can have no other Principle but Atheism to *warrant* their Actions; and when once they have abandoned all *Sense* and *Remembrance* of God, so that he is not in all their Thoughts, they are in a fair forwardness to *Infidelity*. For tho' as yet they do not actually *disbelieve* his Existence, so neither do they actually *believe* it; for how should they actually believe *that* which they have no *Sense* or *Thought* of; so that in this insensible State their Faith is concerned neither *one* way nor *t'other*, nor are they at all solicitous whether there *be* a God or *no*. Thus from their *profane Neglect* of God's Worship, Men naturally slide into an habitual *Senselessness* and *Incogitancy* of him, and from thence to *not believing*; and from thence to *disbelieving* him is an *easy* and almost *necessary* Transition.

Of the Truth of which the Age we live in will furnish us with too many *sorrowful* Instances. For as this Nation which hath been always remarked for a *grave, serious* and *religious* Genius, was never so generally *tainted* with Atheism as now; so neither was it ever chargeable with such a general Neglect of the Publick Worship of God, which for several Ages after the Reformation, was duly *frequented*, and devoutly *celebrated*, till by the Prevalence of our *restless* Sects and Factions, the Discipline of the Church was gradually *weakned*, and at last totally *destroyed*; in the happy Days before which the Families of each Parish went *hand-in-hand* together to the House of God, and

with *one* Heart and Voice celebrated his Praise and Worship; and to absent one's self *ordinarily* from the Publick Assemblies, was hardly consistent with the *Reputation* of being a Christian. By which means their natural *Sense* and *Dread* of the divine Power, being continually *awakened* and *revived*, they were not only *secured* by it from all Atheistical Impressions, but also *animated* and *excited* to a pious and sober Conversation. But the Spirit of Schism prevailing against the Power and Discipline of the Church, till it had utterly *disabled* it from restraining the Wantonness of that *crooked* and *perverse* Generation; some incorporated themselves into *separate Communion*s, and others, under Pretence of so doing, withdrew from the *Publick Assemblies* to the common Resorts of *Idleness*, *Drunkennes* and *Debauchery*; and whilst the *Masters* took the Liberty of *Conscience* to go to *Conventicles*, the *Servants* pretending to be of a different Persuasion assumed the Liberty of *Will* to go to *Taverns* and *Ale-houses*; insomuch that it grew a common Observation, that there have been more young People debauched on the *Lord's Day* than all the *Week after*, whilst under pretence of *joining* with a different Communion, they have taken occasion to *withdraw* themselves from the inspection of their Parents and Masters. And till once our Schisms and Divisions are *cured*, it will be impossible to *prevent* this ill Practice, unless we will be so unjust as to deny *that* Liberty of *Conscience* to our *Servants* which with so much *Clamour* and *Confidence* we demand of our Governors. And thus by degrees *Profaneness* hath insinuated itself under the Covert of *Schism*, and
Liberty

Liberty of Conscience became a common Sanctuary, for the licentious *Neglect* and Contempt of God's Worship, till at last it grew so *common* and *fashionable*, that it almost ceased to be *scandalous*. Yea, so far at length hath this *impious* Humour prevailed, that to *go to Church*, and be *devout*, is among too many Men grown a Note of *Disgrace*, and the Character of a *Priest-ridden Fool*; and a Man is hardly looked upon as fit for *genteel Conversation*, that knows any other use of a Holy-day, but only to be at leisure to *lie a bed*, or to *Game* or *Drink* and *Debauch*; by which *Neglect* and Contempt of the Worship of God, that natural Sense of him which should have been *quickened* and *cherished* by it, hath been gradually *worn out* of Men's Minds; the Consequence of which is, all that *Atheism* and *Infidelity* that overspreads this present Age. For when once Men have *renounced* the Worship of God, and in Consequence are *abandoned* of their natural Sense of his Majesty, they are upon the Brink of *Atheism*, into which their own *vile* Lusts, whose Interest it is that there *should* be no God, will easily *precipitate* them. But alas! how *ridiculous* as well as *impious* is it for Men to take occasion from their own *Neglect* of God's Worship, to renounce the *Belief* of his Being! what is this but to *tail* one folly to another, and to second *Extravagance* with *Madness*? It would make one amazed to think that ever reasonable Beings should be so *besotted*, and to live in a World over which an Almighty Being *presides*, who sees all their Actions, and in whose Hands all Events are which concern them, and even the *everlasting* Fate of their Souls; and yet take no more *notice*

of him, pay no more *Respect* or *Veneration* to him, than if he were the meerest *Trifle* or most insignificant *Cypher* in the whole Creation. But sure when Men have been guilty of such a *black* and *horrid* Impiety, one would think their wisest Course for the time to come should be to *repent* of it, and to endeavour to *compensate* for their past Profaneness by the strictness and sincerity of their future Devotion. But for Men to proceed from *neglecting* God's Worship to *denying* his Being, is to do worse because they have done *ill*, and thereby to *inflame* the provocation, as if they were resolved to render their Condition *desperate*, because they have been so *fool-hardy* as to render it *dangerous*.

And thus I have given a short Account of the common *Causes* of Atheism, which you see are all derived from Men's *Wills* and not from their *Reason*. For this I do most firmly believe, that the Arguments of God's Existence are so *plain* and *convincing*, that no Man ever *was* or *can be* an Atheist without some inexcusable Fault in his *Will*.

S E C T. II.

Of the inexcusable Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism.

THE next thing I proposed was to endeavour to *confirm* and *establish* this great Principle of Religion, *viz.* the *Belief* of a God, by representing

senting the great *Folly* and *Unreasonableness* of *Atheism*. In discoursing which I shall meddle no more than needs must with the *Proofs* and *Arguments* of a Deity, because as I have shewed before, it is not for want of *Arguments* that Men turn Atheists, but for want of *Consideration* and an *honest* Will ; and that the *Bias* that carries them towards Infidelity is not in their *Understandings*, but in their *Wills* and *Affections* ; that 'tis only their *Partiality* to their Lusts, that inclines them to Atheism ; and that the Reason why they are so ready to believe that *there* is no God, is, because they wish in their Hearts that *there were* none. To establish the Belief of a God therefore, I shall endeavour to represent the *Folly* and *Unreasonableness* of Men's being partial on the side of *Atheism*, supposing it were *disputable* whether there be a God or *no* : And this will evidently appear in the following Particulars.

I. The Atheist concludes against the *Dignity* of *human Nature*, and renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*.

II. He concludes against the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *human Society*.

III. He concludes against that which is the main *Support* and *Comfort* of human Life.

IV. He concludes for *that* side of the *Question* which is infinitely the most *unsafe* and *hazardous*.

V. He concludes for the *unsafest* side of the *Question* upon the *highest Uncertainties*.

VI. He plainly *contradicts himself* in his *Conclusion*.

I. The

I. The Atheist concludes against the *Dignity of human Nature*, and thereby renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*. For the chief *Worth* and *Dignity* of human Nature consists in its Relation to *God*, without whom its *noblest* and most *excellent* Faculties are in a great measure *useless* and *insignificant*; for if there be *no God*, the Objects of our five Senses are the *sole Entertainment* of our Understanding and Will, and we have no *other* use of these mighty Faculties, which (if there were any such thing as an infinite *Truth* and *Goodness* are naturally capable of enjoying them) but only to *consult* and *choose* the Gratifications of our *Sense*, and the Pleasures of this perishing *Body*. For excepting *God* there is no such thing in Nature as a *spiritual Enjoyment*, no *Good* to be found, but what is prepared to entertain the boundless *Liquorishness* of our carnal Appetites; and had we none but such as these to consult for, our *Reason*, which is the *Crown* and *Glory* of our Natures, would have nothing else to do but to *cater* for our *Flesh*, and we should have an Understanding and Will to no other Purpose, but to enable us to play the *Brutes* with more *Skill* and *Sagacity*. And indeed, setting *God* aside, we are so far from having the Advantage of Brutes by being *rational*, that we are rather so much the more *wretched* and *despicable*, than *they*. For as for the Happiness of *this Life*, which only consists of *sensual Good*, the Senses and Appetites we have in *common* with the Beasts that perish are sufficient for the Enjoyment of it; and with these we might relish it as well *without* our Reason as *with* it; we might *eat* and *drink* and *sleep*, and enjoy *all* the Pleasures of

of a Brute with as much *Gust* and *Savour* as we do now with our *Reason*. For if we *were* Brutes we should do as Brutes *do*; we should *weary* ourselves no longer with *vain* Pursuits, nor *vex* ourselves with *fruitless* Expectations, nor *torment* ourselves with the *Fears* of a Disappointment, but even take our Pleasures when our Appetites *craved* them, and they freely *offered* themselves to our Enjoyment. And though our *Reason* doth sometimes *cook* the Enjoyments of our Sense, and give them a higher *Relish* and *Luxury*, yet this Advantage is very much out-weighed by the many *Regrets*, and *Remorses*, and *stinging Reflections* it intermingles with our Pleasures; so that had we only the Faculties of *Brutes*, I am verily persuaded we should more *sincerely* enjoy the Happiness of the *brutal* Nature; but to be sure we should bear our Miseries with much more *Ease* and *Chearfulness*. For supposing there *is* no God, our Reason can afford us no solid Support under any Calamity; the main Arguments of Comfort, as I shall shew by and by, being derived from the Consideration of *God* and his *Providence*; which being taken away, I doubt not but we should bear our Miseries *without* our Reason much better than *with* it. For then we should neither be *terrified* at the *Approach* of them, nor *tormented* with *Despair* under them; then we should neither *multiply* them with *false* Opinions, nor *enrage* them with *bitter* Reflections on the Causes of them; but whenever they happened, bear them as *Beasts* do, without any other Pain or Uneasiness than what they necessarily *impressed* on our *Senses*, which would render them a thousand times more tolerable to

us, than all our *Arguments* can do, supposing we have no *God* nor *Providence* to argue from.

So that were that *true* which the Atheist concludes for, *viz.* That there is no *God*, it would follow that *Reason* in a Man serves to no other Purpose, but to render him more *wretched* and *despicable*. If there be a *God* indeed, our rational Faculties are of *excellent* Use; as having an Object *commensurate* to their widest Capacities, and every way *fit* and *worthy* to employ and exercise them; an infinite *Truth* for our *Understanding* to dive into, and an infinite *Good* for our *Wills* and *Affections* to pursue and embrace. But if there be nothing to be enjoyed by us but what is *carnal* and *sensual*, our Reason is so far from being our *Ornament* and *Perfection*, that it is the *Plague* and *Disgrace* of our Natures.

For for any Nature to have more Faculties than what are necessary to its Happiness, is *monstrous*; and therefore had we nothing to enjoy but the Happiness of *Brutes*, it would be a *Deformity* to our Natures to have the Faculties of *Angels*; because these Faculties would be in *vain*, there being no *adequate* Object in the Nature of Things to employ and entertain them. So that were the Doctrine of the Atheist *true*, it would cashier our Reason for a *vain* and *useless* Faculty; a thing that serves our Nature to little other Purpose, but only to vex and disquiet it. And what Man that hath any *Regard* or *Reverence* for himself, would ever be fond of a Belief that thus *sinks* and *depreciates* him, and lays the Glory of his Nature in the *Dust*? For if it be true that there is no *God*, it is as true that Man is a most *despicable* Creature,
that

that his *Reason*, upon which he so much values himself, is a *frivolous* and *impertinent* Faculty; a Faculty that can serve him to no higher Purpose than only to be a *Cook* and a *Taylor* to his Body, to study *Sauces* and *Fashions* for it; and that while it *serves* him in *this*, *disserves* him in a thousand *other* Instances; in mingling his Pleasures with *Gall* and *Wormwood*, with *Fears* and *Impatiencies*, *Anxieties* and *Remorses*, and in *aggravating* and *putting Stings* into his Griefs and Calamities. So that when all is done, the only thing that makes it *worth the while* for a Man to be *reasonable*, is, that there is a Being of infinite Perfection to be *known*, and *loved*, and *imitated*, and *adored* by him; and to *deny* the Existence of this blessed Being, is infinitely to *undervalue* ourselves, and to *eclipse* the Glory and Dignity of our Natures. So that by being partial to *Atheism* we are partial to our own *Shame* and *Disgrace*, and industriously consult the *Reproach* and *Infamy* of human Nature; for the Devil himself cannot affix a blacker *Scandal* on our Reason than what is implied in this Assertion, That there is no God.

And as it lays the greatest *Reproach* upon our Nature, so it also renders us the most *ridiculous* of all Beings. For there are certain Affections interwoven with human Nature, which if there be no God are shamefully *ridiculous*; such as the *Dread of invisible Powers*, the *Sense of Good and Evil*, and the anxious Expectation of a *Judgment to come*; all which are so deeply *inlaid* in our Beings, as that with all our Arts and Reasoning we cannot totally *erase* them. And even the Atheists themselves, who have tried all possible Ways of
extin-

extinguishing them, have found by Experience that the *utmost* they can do is, to *damp* and *stupify* them at present; but that in despite of them they will *revive* and *awake* again when *Death* or *Danger* approaches them. Now how *ridiculous* are these Affections in human *Natures*, if there be no such Being as a God? For upon this Supposal we have *Passions* that have no *Objects* in the Nature of Things, that have nothing in the World to *move* and *affect* them, but *wild Chimeras*, *flying Dragons*, and *Castles in the Air*; and whereas all other Beings have *real Objects* in Nature corresponding to their several *Instincts* and *Affections* (for so the *Hare* hath a natural Dread of a *Dog*, the *Sheep* of a *Wolf*, the *Mice* of a *Cat*, the *Toad* of a *Spider*, all the Objects of which Dread have a *real Existence*) poor silly Man, supposing there is no God, naturally *trembles* at an *invisible* Nothing, and is horribly *afraid* of the *Shadow* of an *Imagination*. So that if the *Atheist's* Opinion were true, the *Ape* that looks pale at the Sight of a *Snail*, and flies as if he feared lest that slow Creature should overtake and devour him, would be a great deal less *ridiculous* than *timorous* Man, whose Nature is thus *bagged* with *frightful* Imaginations of invisible Powers and a Judgment to come.

And what Man that hath any Reverence for the human Nature within him, would ever suffer himself to be *bribed* for an Opinion that doth not only *undervalue* but *deride* and *ridicule* it? Should you hear yourself branded with a *contemptible* Character, or ranked among *Apes* or any such *ridiculous* Animals, you would doubtless be so far from *courting* the Author of it, that you would re-

sent it as a great Affront, and think yourselves obliged in honour to *return* the Provocation; and yet for the sake of a few base *Lusts*, which are the *Shame* and *Scandal* of your Natures, you espouse the Cause of Atheism, though it *derides* and *affronts* you to your Face, and *stains* the Glory of your Natures with the most *contemptible* and *ridiculous* Character in the World.

II. The Atheist concludes against the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *human Society*. For the Soul that *penetrates* through all human *Society*, and *compacts* and *unites* it in a regular Body, is Religion, or the *Sense* and *Acknowledgment* of a Divine Power, without which all the Parts of the Corporation of Mankind, like the Members of a *dead* Body, must necessarily *disband* and *fly abroad* into Atoms. For a *formed* Society, which is an *united* Multitude, consists in the *Harmony* and *Consent* of its Members mutually *united* by Laws and Agreements, and *disposed* into a *Regular* Subordination to one another, neither of which can any human Society long continue without the *Belief* and *Acknowledgment* of a God.

For without this, in the first Place, it is impossible that the Parts of any Society should continue *united* by Laws and Agreement. For it is from the Belief of a God, that all the *Obligations* of Conscience are *derived*; so that take *that* away and *these* must dissolve; and when the Obligations of Conscience are *dissolved*, there is nothing but Men's *temporal Interests* can oblige them to *conform* to those Laws and mutual Agreements, by which they are united to one another. And if it be their *Interest* only that obliges them to be *just* and

and *faithful* to their mutual Agreements, they will be equally obliged to be *unjust* and *unfaithful*, whenever it is their *Interest* to be so. So that this Principle, which only obliges them to be *honest* while it is for their *Advantage*, will as effectually oblige them to be *Knaves* whenever the Case is *altered*; and Things being reduced to this Issue, there remains no Foundation of *Trust* and mutual *Confidence* among Men. For what can any Man's *Promise* signify, if he be under no Obligation but *Interest*? To be sure if it be *for* his Interest he will *do* what he *says* without any *Promise*; but if it be *not*, what *Promise* can oblige him? You will say it is his Interest to keep his *Word*, because otherwise he will forfeit his *Reputation* for the future? But pray what *Reputation* can a Man have to *forfeit*, that owns no other *Law* or *Obligation* but his Interest? Or who will ever presume upon that Man's *Word* and *Engagement*, whose *avowed* Principles it is to be honest no longer than he can *gain* by it? Thus Atheism you see, resolves all our *Obligations* into our worldly *Interest*, which is so *fickle* and *mutable* a Principle, so dependent upon *Chance* and the *Inconstancies* of Fortune, that there is no hold to be taken of those that are governed by it. For that which is their Interest to *Day* may be their Disadvantage *To-morrow*, and if it should *so* happen, they must steer a *contrary* Course, or else act *contrary* to their leading Principle. So that for Men to trust each other upon this *fickle* Principle, is all one as to rely upon the Constancy of a *Weather-cock*, which every contrary Wind turns to a contrary Position. And Things being once reduced to *this* Issue, that Men

can place no *Trust* or *Confidence* in one another, their Society will soon become their greatest *Plague* and *Vexation*. For every *Man* will be forced to stand upon his Guard against every *Man*, and keep himself *reserved* and *retired* within himself, till at last, out of mutual *Distrust* and *Jealousy* of one another, they are forced to *withdraw* their Society, and to *live apart*, in separate Dens, for fear of being *intrapt* and *devoured* by each other.

And as *Atheism* cuts in sunder those *Ligaments* of mutual *Trust* and *Agreement*, by which the Parts of human Society are united; so it also *dissolves* that regular *Subordination* that is between them. *Plutarch* observes in his Treatise against *Colot*, Πόλις ἂν μοι δοκῇ μᾶλλον ἐδάφους χώρι, ἢ πολιτεία τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης ἀναιρεθείσης πανήλ' πασι, σύσασιν λαβεῖν, ἢ λαβεῖσα τηρῆσαι, i. e. It seems to be more possible for a City to stand without Ground, than for a Common-wealth to subsist and continue without the Belief of a God; which is indeed the only *firm Foundation* whereupon all *Government* and *Society* depends. For if there be no God, what should oblige any to *crown* any *Superior*, or *pay* any *Submission*? And if his *Interest* be his only *Obligation* to his Superiors, whenever he can mend his Fortune by *rebell*ing against them, that very same *Interest*, which at present *restrains* him from it, will with equal Force *invite* him to it; nor will it signify any thing that we are obliged to the contrary by *Oaths* of Fidelity and Allegiance: For if it be our *Interest* to be faithful to the Government, our own Prudence and Discretion will oblige us to it *without* such *Oaths* as well as *with* them; but if it be *not* our *Interest*,

terest, and this be the only Principle that obliges us, no *Oath* or *Ergagement* can hold us. So that in this State of Things all the Security that Governours can have of their Subjects, is, that they *will* not rebel when they are *not able*; but as soon as they think it *safe*, to be sure they will think it *lawful*; which being once admitted, will *undermine* the very Foundation of Government, and utterly dissolve that *regular Subordination* by which human Society is *supported*. Whereas admitting that the Laws of our *Prince* are bound upon us by the Authority of our *Sovereign Lord*, who can render us eternally *happy* or *miserable*, we are obliged to *obey* him by all that we can *hope* or *fear*, and have all the Engagements to *Loyalty* that the Reflections on a *happy* or *miserable* Eternity can lay upon us. What a prodigious Piece of *Folly* is it therefore for Men to embrace *Atheism* as their *Interest*, which doth thus directly tend to *deprive* us of all the *Comforts* of Society, by *involving* us in eternal *Confusions* and *Disorders*? For if once we take away *mutual Trust*, and *Government* from the *World*, both which have a necessary *Dependence* on the Belief of a God, we break all the *Harmony* of *human Society*, and convert it into a *Common-wealth* of *Canibals*. And what Man in his Wits could ever be found of an Opinion that proclaims *open War* with Mankind, and is pregnant with Consequents so *fatal* and *destructive* to the *World*? Can we think it more *advantageous* to us that *Atheism* should be *true*, than that human Society should be *upheld* and *perpetuated*? or are the *Pleasures* we reap from the *Lusts* which incline us to *Atheism*, comparably so valuable as the *Benefits*

nefits which accrue to us from being *formed* and *united* into regular Corporations? If not, how apparently do we engage against our own *Interest*, when we espouse the *Cause of Irreligion*?

III. The Atheist concludes against that which is the main *Support* and *Comfort* of *human Life*. For while we are in this World, our *best* and *securest* Condition is exposed to a World of *sad* and *uncomfortable* Accidents, which we have neither the *Wisdom* to *foresee*, nor the *Power* to *prevent*: So far are we from being *self-sufficient* as to our worldly *Happiness*, that there are a *thousand* Causes upon which we depend for it, that are not in our *Power* to dispose of; and in such a State of *Uncertainty*, wherein we are continually *bandied* to and fro, and made the *Game* of *inconstant* Fortune, what *Quiet* or *Security* can we enjoy within ourselves without believing that there is a *God* at the Helm, that steadily *over-rules* all Events that concern us, and *steers* and *directs* them by the invariable *Compass* of his own infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*. For considering how *poor* and *indigent* our Nature is, how we are feign to *seek abroad*, and to go a *begging* from Door to Door for our *Happiness*; how we depend upon *Chance*, and are *secure* of nothing we *possess*, or *desire*, or *hope for*; how prone we are to be *alarmed* with the Prospect of a *sad* Futurity, and to *magnify* distant Evils in our own *Apprehensions*; how apt we are to *aggravate* our Miseries by our Impatience and Despair, and to *pill* our Enjoyments by expecting more from them than their Natures will afford; considering these Things, I say, which way can we turn ourselves without a *God*? or where can

we *repose* our restless Thoughts but in his *Providence*? Verily, could I be *tempted* to believe that there is *no* God, I should look upon *human Nature*, in its present Circumstances, as the most *forlorn* and *abandoned* Part of the Creation, and wish that I had had the Luck to be of any *other* Species than that of *rational Animal*. For in the State I am I find myself liable to a thousand Dangers *against* which I have no *Sanctuary*, and under which I have no *Support*, if there be *no* God to govern the World; and having such a dismal Prospect of Things *before* me, and a busy Mind *within* me that will be continually *working on* and *aggravating* the Evils of it, what can I do with myself, or how can I enjoy myself without a God to *rely on*? Upon the Supposal that he *is*, and that he *governs* the World, I can easily *relieve* myself under the most *dismal* Apprehensions; I can *fairly* conclude and *safely* depend on it, that if I take care by my Submission to God's Will to make him my *Friend*, he will either *prevent* the Evils I apprehend, or *support* me under them, or *convert* them to my *Good*, either of which is sufficient to set my *Heart at ease*, and instate me in a *quiet* Enjoyment of myself. But now, by *giving up* the Belief of a God, I *throw away* all these Considerations, and leave myself utterly *destitute* and *supportless*. For what solid Ground of *Support* can I have when I have no manner of *Securify* either that the Evils I *dread* shall be *prevented*, or that I shall have a proportionable *Strength* to bear them, or that I shall ever reap any *good* or *advantage* from them? without *which* Considerations every Evil that *threatens* or *befals* me is *pure*
unmingled

unmingled Misery, against which there is no *Fence* or *Cordial* in *Reason* or *Philosophy*. For suppose I should agree with the ancient Moralists, that every ill Accident that befalls me is *fatal*, as being the Effect of some *necessary Cause* that is without my *Power* or *Disposal*, and therefore it is unreasonable for me to *grieve* at it; this will be so far from any way *mollifying* the Anguish of my Mind, that it will rather *inrage* and *inflame* it. For that my Calamity is *fatal*, so that it is not in my Power to *avoid* or *remove* it, is rather an *Aggravation* than a *Diminution* of it. Or suppose I should reason as the same Moralists otherwhiles do, Why should I *grieve* at the Evils that befall me, when alas! my *Grief* will be so far from *lessening* them that it will rather *increase* and *multiply* them, contribute new *Venom* to their *Stings*, and render them more *pungent* and *dolorous*? What a faint Cordial would it be to my *oppressed* Mind, to consider that my Grievings will but *augment* my *Load*? It is some *Ease* to a dejected Soul to *vent* its Grievings in *Moans* and *Lamentations*, which while she seeks to *smother* in a *sullen Silence*, like imprisoned Wind will breed a *Cholick* in her Bowels; and is it not a sad Thing that I must deny myself the *only* Solace of a *miserable* Man for fear of *augmenting* my *Misery*? Again, suppose I should reason thus with the same Authors, that Afflictions are *indifferent* things, and in themselves neither *good* nor *evil*, but indifferently *improveable* into *Mischiefs* or *Benefits*; this I confess were a *good* Argument, supposing that the Afflictions came from a *Good God*, who can *extract* Good out of all Evils, and render the *rankest* Poison *Medicinal*; but otherwise

you will find it is but a *cold* Comfort to call your *Misery* by *another* Name: For if there be no God to *temper* our Evils, and to *ordain* and *direct* them to *wise* and *good* Ends, we shall find in the Issue they will prove themselves *Evils* to us by what *soft* Name soever we may *call* them. Again, and to name no more, Suppose I should reason thus, as these Masters of Morality do, that to bear Afflictions with an unconcerned Mind is *brave*, and *manly*, and *generous*; that it is an Argument of a *great* and *heroick* Mind, that hath raised itself above the *Reach* of Misfortunes; I readily *confess* so it is, supposing a Man hath *good Reason* thus to bear his Afflictions, which is the *Question* in Debate; for then it is the Triumph of *Reason* over *Passion*, and an *illustrious* Instance of a *well-fortified* Mind; but if we have *no Reason* for it, all these glorious Words, *Generous*, *Brave*, &c. are nothing but *empty Flash* and *mere* Rodomontade. For for a Man to be *unconcerned* with Evils *without Reason*, is so far from being generous and brave, that it is an Argument of his brutal *Stupidity* and *Foolhardiness*. But yet supposing that there is no God, *these* are the main Arguments we have to *support* ourselves under any Calamity. But alas, such *real* Grievs of ours are not to be redressed with *petty* Sayings and *grave* Sentences, which though they may look takingly at a *Distance*, will when we come to *apply* and *experience* them force us to pronounce as *Job* did of his Friends, *miserable Comforters are ye all, and Physicians of no Value*. So that were we left *destitute* of God and a *Providence*, and of all those *blessed* Supports we derive from *thence*, we were of *all* Creatures the

most

most miserable. For in this State of Things we are compassed about with *Miseries* and *Misfortunes*, and which without God is our *greatest* Misfortune, we have a Thing called *Reason* within our Breast, which is very *ingenious* in giving *Stings* to our *Miseries*, and *vexing* us with *cutting* Reflections of them, but it is not able to *qualify* one Grief, or minister one Dram of *solid Comfort* to us.

But when we lift up our Eyes to *God*, there are such *vast* and *innumerable* Comforts flowing down to us from the Consideration of his *Nature* and *Providence*, as are sufficient not only to *allay* our *Sorrow*, but to *convert* them into *joys* and *Triumphs*. For in him we behold not only an infinite *Wisdom* that always *knows* what is best for us, but also an infinite *Goodness* that always *wills* what it knows to be so, and an infinite *Power* that always *does* what it wills; and whilst we *see* and *consider* this, there is nothing in the World can happen *amiss* to us; welcome *Pain*, welcome *Pleasure*, welcome *Loss*, welcome *Gain*, welcome *Disgrace*, welcome *Honour*; for if we have but *God* our *Friend*, we may securely *depend* upon it, that whatsoever befalls us is *best* for us.

Who but a *Madman* therefore would ever espouse the Cause of *Atheism*, or make it his Interest to *exclude* God out of the World? Indeed were he an *envious*, *malicious*, or *tyrannical* Being, that *repined* at the Happiness of his Creatures, and watched all Opportunities to *plague* or *destroy* them, it were but reasonable we should endeavour to *quit* our Minds of the *Belief* of him; but to imagine it our *Interest* to believe there is no such

Being in the World as a *Good God*, that out of the immense *Benignity* of his Nature *espouses* our Interest, and *takes care* of our Happiness; that *understands* our Wants, and *compassionates* our Sufferings, and is *able* and *willing* to *support* and *relieve* us; that requires *nothing* of us but what is for our good, and will infinitely *reward* us for doing *that* which is *best* for ourselves; that *connives* at our Follies, and *pities* our Infirmities, and upon our unfeigned *Repentance* is ready to be *reconciled* to us, even when we *wilfully* and *presumptuously* provoke him; to imagine it, I say, our Interest to shake off the Belief of such a *blessed* Being as this, is the utmost *height* of Folly and *Madness*. For it were doubtless a thousand times more tolerable for Men that the *Sun* should be *pulled down* from the Firmament, and all the *Lights* of Heaven *extinguished*, than that the *Belief* of a God should be *banished* from the World, the absence of which would *over-spread* Mankind with such a *dismal Night* of Horror and Despair and Blackness and Darkeness, as would render all *wise* and *considering* Men *weary* of their Beings, and cause them to *wish* a thousand times over, as for the *utmost* Good they could *devise* for themselves, O that there were such a Being as a *God* at the *Helm* of the World, that so the Affairs of it might be *steered* by an *infinite Power*, that is always *directed* by an *infinite Wisdom*, and always *biassed* and *inclined* by an *infinite Goodness*? What then can be more *brutish* or *irrational*, than for the sake of a few base Lusts that are the *Scandal* of our Nature, the *Bane* of our Society, the *Vexation* of our Lives, and the *Disturbance* of all our Happiness,

pinels, to banish the *Belief* of a God from our Minds, which is the *Foundation* of our Hope, and the only *Support* we can rationally *depend* on.

IV. The Atheist concludes for that side of the Question which is infinitely the most *unsafe* and *bazardous*. He who believes there is a God and acts accordingly, runs a very *small* and *inconsiderable* Venture, if in the Issue of Things he should chance to be *mistaken*; he only ventures the *dissatisfying* a few *extravagant* Lusts, the crossing some *irregular* Inclinations of his Nature, which if he had *gratified* would have *vexed* and *tormented* him, and *entangled* his Life with a thousand *ill* Circumstances; he only ventures some *Prayers* and some *Tears*, some *Watchings* and *Strugglings* and *Contentions* with himself, and perhaps some *Reproaches* and *Persecutions* for Righteousness sake, in Exchange for which he hath commonly a *healthful*, and a *prosperous*, an *even*, *safe* and *contented* Life, a *quiet* and a *triumphant* Conscience, and a *joyous* Expectation of a blisful *Eternity* to come, which do outweigh all the Incommodities he ventures, all the *Pains* he undergoes, and all the *Pleasures* of which he debars himself; and if in the Conclusion, when he resigns up his Breath, it appears that there is neither *God* nor *Heaven* nor *Hell*, his Condition will be altogether as *good*, as the Atheist's, with whom he will *sleep* quietly, in the *same* Dust, under the same everlasting Insensibility.

But on the contrary, the Atheist, by *believing* that there is no God, and *acting* accordingly, runs the most *desperate* Hazard in the World. For besides that he *throws away* the main Support and Comfort of his Life, and lays himself *open* to all

Contingencies, and *resigns up the Satisfaction* of a good Conscience together with the *Hope of a blessed Futurity*, and all the innumerable Joys it abounds with; besides all which, I say, he ventures to be *eternally wretched and miserable* in the World to come, and exposes himself *naked and defenceless* to the *unquenchable Wrath* of an *everlasting God*; in Exchange for all which he hath no other *present Compensation*, but the Pleasures of a *riotous and tumultuary Life*, which do always *die away* in the Enjoyment, and are generally *dash'd and sophisticated* with a thousand very *sad and uncomfortable Circumstances*. And then if when he concludes this *present Scene of Life* he should find himself *mistaken* in his *Atheistical Confidence*, and be unexpectedly *summoned* to the Tribunal of *that God*, whose *Being and Authority* he hath so peremptorily *denied and affronted*, and from thence be *transmitted* into a *dismal Eternity*, there to *languish out an Everlasting Existence* in *remediless Woes and unpitied Lamentations*; how would it *astonish and confound* him to find his confident Infidelity *baffled* by such a woful *Experiment*, when instead of being *a-sleep* in a State of *Silence and Insensibility*, which was the Thing he *depended on*, he shall find himself *wasted* to a strange shoar, and there *landed* among *Devils and miserable Spirits* in a State of *endless, easeless and remediless Calamity*! How *blank and forlorn* will the *Fool* look to find himself thus *fatally* mistaken? and yet for all he knows *this* may be the *Result and Issue* of Things. So that it is a very *small Hazard* you see that *good Men* run, compared with *that* of the *Atheist*; for should they

they be mistaken, *their* Condition will be *as good* as *his* at the winding up of the Bottom; but if they *should* not, it will be *infinitely better*.

It is storied of a certain Hermit, who being retired from the World, led a very *severe* and *mortified* Life, that being one Day met by two Cardinals, who were riding by with a very *pompous* Equipage, was thus accosted by them, Father, why should you thus *mortify* and *macerate* yourself by retiring from the *Glories* and *Pleasures* of this Life? Suppose now that after all your Religious *Severities*, there should be neither a *God* nor a *future World* to reward you, would it not be *egregious* Folly in you thus to throw away *present* Enjoyments for *future* Nothings? To which the good Man presently returned this Answer; But, Sirs, suppose there *should* be a *God* and a *future World* to *punish* you, would it not be *egregious* Folly in you, to run such a *desperate* Venture as you do of being *everlastingly* miserable, for the sake of a few *momentary* Honours and Advancements? Upon which, as the Story saith, the Cardinals being *convinced*, went away very *pensive*. And herein doubtless the honest Hermit was very much in the right. For were it a *Moot-point* whether there *be* a *God* or *no*, one would think in a Matter of such *unspeakable* Moment, that where the Hazard on each Side is so *infinitely unequal*, there is no Man in his Wits but would choose the *safest* Side, and make *that* his Rule and Principle to live by. In this therefore the Atheist is justly chargeable with the most desperate *Folly*, that whereas at *least* he might be *safe*, if not *eternally happy*, by *believing* that there *is* a
God,

God, and *acting* accordingly, he rather chuses to *venture* being *eternally miserable*, by *believing* there *is* none, and *acting* as if there were none. In short, this is the plain State of the Case, if I *believe* that God *is*, and *act* consonantly, I shall be *safe* if he be *not*, and eternally *happy* if he *be*; whereas if I believe that he is *not*, I am sure to be *miserable* for ever if he *be*, and am only *safe* from being miserable for ever if he be *not*; and this being the Case, I leave any Man to judge which of the *two* is in Prudence more *eligible*, the *Peradventure* of being *happy* for ever, or of being *miserable* for ever, supposing *both* to be *equally probable*. But,

V. The Atheist concludes for the *unsafe* side of the Question upon the greatest *Uncertainties* in the World. One would think before a Man assented to a Conclusion, the Consequence of which, if he should be *mistaken*, will be for ever *fatal* to him, he should be so *wise* at least as to *look* before he *leap*, and satisfy himself of the *Grounds* he *concludes* on, and not to give up his *Assent* upon every *doubtful* and *uncertain* Appearance. Now that Part of the Question which the Atheist *assents* to, is of such *mighty* Consequence, as that should it prove *false* he is *lost* for ever; and therefore one would think it concerned him to be very *sure* of *his Hand*, and take care that his Assent be *founded* upon very *strong* and *undeniable* Evidence; instead of which he *assents* at a *venture*, and grounds his *Belief* upon the most *sandy* Foundations. For,

I. He concludes for a *pure Negative*.

II. He concludes for it upon a *bare Possibility*.

III. He

III. He concludes for it against the *best Evidence* that the *contrary* will admit.

I. He concludes for a *pure Negative*. All Men are agreed that it is a very *hard* thing to prove a *Negative*; but to prove a *pure Negative* is *impossible*, unless the Existence of the thing which it denies *implies* an *express* Contradiction. 'Tis true where a Thing *visibly* exists so that we can perceive as well how it doth *not* exist, as how it *doth*, we may with as good Evidence *deny* as *affirm*; but as for pure *Negatives*, which *deny* the very *Existence* of such Things as may *possibly* exist, it is impossible to be *certain* of them without an *infinite* Understanding. For before we can be sure that what is *not* in *our* Understanding is *not* in *Nature*, we must be sure that whatsoever *is* in *Nature*, *is* in *our* Understanding, otherwise a thousand Things may *be*, *tho'* we do not *understand* them. As for Instance, Unless I were sure that I had the perfect *Map* or *Geography* of such a Country in my Head, it is impossible I should be *sure* that there is no such *Town* or *City*, or *Region* belonging thereunto; and so unless I were sure that the *Cosmography* or *universal Map* of *Nature* were perfectly *delineated* on my *Understanding*, I cannot *positively* affirm that such or such a Being doth *not* actually exist. So that as a great Divine of our own hath well observed upon this very Argument, after all that can be said *against* a thing this will *still* be *true*, that many Things *possibly are* which we know *not* of, and that many Things more *may be* than *are*. For unless our Understanding were *extended* to the whole *Compass* of *Nature*, there may be, for all we know, ten thousand Things in *Nature* which
are

are not in our *Understanding*. So that concerning *pure Negatives* we can never be *certain*, unless the Things which they deny be absolutely *impossible*, and imply, in the very *Notion* of their *Existence*, a *plain Contradiction*; which cannot be said of the Existence of God. For by God we mean nothing but a Being endowed with all *possible Perfections*, and to say that it is *impossible* that there should be any such Being as is endowed with all the Perfections that it is *possible* for a Being to be endowed with, is to assert *Possibilities impossible*, which is a *Contradiction in Terms*. Since therefore this *Negative* that there is *no* God, denies that which is *possible* in its Nature, and which implies not the least *Shadow* of *Contradiction*, it is impossible supposing it *were* true, for any *finite Understanding* to be *certain* of it. What Man in his Wits then would ever presume to *deny* the Being of God, and to *stake* his everlasting Fate on it, when he knows beforehand that he cannot be *sure* that his Denial is *true*, and that if it prove *false* he is lost for ever? Alas! what is this but to *throw Dice* for our Souls, and to *venture* our Salvation on a *wild Uncertainty*.

II. The Atheist concludes for a *pure Negative* upon a *bare Possibility*. One would think in a Matter of such infinite Moment, Men should at least be so *wise* as not to conclude without *strong Probabilities*, where they can find no *Certainty* to rely on; but so *desperately* Fool-hardy is the Atheist as to suspend his *Faith*, and with that his *Salvation*, upon the *bare Possibility* that there *may* be *no* God. For when he is urged with those Arguments of God's Being, that are drawn from the *beautiful*

Contrivance of the World, he hath no other way to *evade* them, but by endeavouring to demonstrate how by the *necessary* Laws of *Matter* and *Motion*, Things might possibly be *shuffled* together as they are without the *Agency* and *Direction* of a God; and yet even in *this* Attempt so many *inextricable* Difficulties present themselves as have *puzzled* and *confounded* the acuteſt Wits that were ever engaged in it; and while with all their Art and *Contrivance* they have been framing their *Hypothesis* of the Existence of this World *without* a God, they have been forced not only to *beg* some Principles, but also to *assert* others that upon Examination have been found *repugnant* to the Nature of Things; and when all is done, if *both* were true, yet they are altogether *insufficient* to solve a *thousand Phænomena* in Nature. So that the utmost that the most *learned* and *inquisitive* Atheist could ever pretend to, was to advance Atheism to a grand *Perhaps*, and by endeavouring to demonstrate how Things might *possibly* be as they are without a God, to prove that it is *possible* there is none; and yet when all is done, their most *ingenious* Endeavours are only a *Demonstration* that the most *acute* and *witty* Men may be *mistaken*. For what a *hopeless* kind of Task is it to shew how *that* may be the Effect of a blind *Chance* or *Necessity*, which hath all the Characters of a wise *Design* and *Contrivance* fairly imprinted on it? How is it possible for an *undesigning* Chance to fit *Means* to *Ends*, or *Ends* to *Natures*, or so to *proportion* Parts to *one another* as to make a *comely* Symmetry in the *whole*, and this in *ten thousand* Instances, and not fail in *one*? How often, as the above named Author

from

from *Tully* discourses, might a Man after he hath shaken together a Sett of Letters in a Bag, fling them out upon the Ground, before they would fall into an exact Poem, or make a good Discourse in Prose? And may not a little *Book* be as easily made by *Chance*, as the great Volume of the World, in which there is such an *inexhaustible* Treasure of rich *Sense* and *Contrivance*? Or how long might a Man be in sprinkling Colours upon a Canvass with a careless Hand, before they would happen to fall into the exact Picture of a Man? And is a *Man* easier made by *Chance* than his *Picture*? Why may we not as well conceive the most *regular* Building in the World to be *framed* by a *casual* Concourse of *Stone* and *Iron* and *Timber*, as that these *blind* and *rambling* Parts of Matter should chance to place themselves so *orderly* in the World, and to observe such an exact Harmony and Decorum as if *they kept* Time with the musical Laws of some Almighty Mind, that *composed* their Measures and *regulated* their Motions up and down in the Universe?

But granting the Atheist what he so *eagerly* though *unsuccessfully* contends for, that it is *possible* all this might happen by meer Chance, and consequently that there *may* be *no* God in the World, would any Man in his Wits *found* his Faith upon a *meer Possibility*, when it will be as much as his Soul is worth if he should happen to be *mistaken*? It is *possible* that should he throw himself from the Top of a high Steeple, the Air between may be so *condensed* as to *bear* him up and *preserve* him from being *dash'd* in Pieces by the Fall; but would you not think the Man stark mad that should *venture* his Neck

Neck upon that *Possibility*? And yet it is a far more *desperate* Venture that the Atheist makes, by thus *bazarding* his Soul to everlasting *Destruction*, upon a *bare Possibility* that there may be *no* God to *destroy* him.

III. The Atheist concludes against the *best Evidence* that the *Contrary* will admit. For that there is a God we have as full Evidence as the Matter could bear if there *were* one, and to require *more* is *absurd* and *unreasonable*. For let us at present *suppose*, but for Argument-sake, that there *were* such an *infinite* Spirit in the World; a Spirit that were as *wise*, and as *good*, and as *powerful* as *he* whom we call *God* is supposed to be; supposing, I say, there *were* such a Spirit *actually* existing, we could not have *greater* Evidence of it than we have *already* that he *actually* exists. For we could not *see* him with our Eyes, because we suppose him to be a *Spirit*; we could not *demonstrate* his Existence *à priori* or from any Cause, because being the first Cause he must be *uncaused* or *self-originated*. It remains therefore that the only Demonstration we could give of his Being, is that which we call *à posteriori*, or from such *sensible Effects* as can only be ascribed to the *Power* and *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of such a Being; and of such Effects as *these* we have *infinite* Instances before us. For in sum, we have all this *visible World* about us, whose *changeable* Nature demonstrates it to be the Effect of *some* superior Cause, and whose unspeakable *Vastness*, *Beauty*, and *Contrivance*, argues it to be the Effect of some most *wise*, and *good*, and *powerful* Cause. For as to the first, whatsoever is *changeable* cannot *self-exist*, but will necessarily pro-

ceed from some *superior Cause*; because whatsoever *self-exists* is necessarily, and whatsoever is necessarily is *always the same*; that which is *without* any Cause cannot *but* be, and that which is *thus* or *thus without* any Cause, cannot but be *so* or *so* for ever; and consequently if the World were of *itself* without any Cause, it would not only be necessarily, but also *be such as it is* necessarily and unchangeably; but contrariwise we plainly perceive that it runs a *perpetual Course of Change and Alteration*, that its Parts are continually *altering* their Figure, and *shifting* their Places with one another; whereas if this *Part* were of itself necessarily, as it must be if the *Whole* be so, it would necessarily be *where* it is and *what* it is eternally.

And since the *Mutability* of this World argues it to be the Effect of some *superior Cause*, I would feign know whether, considering the *Vastness*, and *Beauty*, and *Contrivance* of it, it be not most reasonable to attribute it to such an *all-good, all-wise*, and *almighty Cause* as we suppose *God* to be. For what less than an *infinite Power* can bear a due Proportion to such a *vast* and *immense* World? Should you enter into a *vast* and *magnificent* Palace, and find no Creature in it, but a Company of *Mice* or *Weasels*, could you possibly believe that these *impotent Vermin* built it? And yet the Building of the most Royal Palace doth not so much *exceed* the Power of these *weak* Animals, as the building of *this* World doth the Power of *any Cause* but a *God*. But then if we consider the *infinite Number* of Beings in the World that are *capable* of Happiness, and the *vast* Provisions that are made to *entertain* them according to their
several

several Capacities, we cannot but thence conclude that the *Power* which made them was *acted* by an *infinite Goodness*. Lastly, that we consider the *rare* and *admirable* Contrivance of the several *Parts* of the World; how *perfect* each one is in its Kind, how exactly *fitted* to each other, and what a lovely *Symmetry* and *Proportion* they all make in the *whole*, how can we otherwise imagine but that that *Power* and *Goodness* which caused it was *directed* by an *infinite Wisdom*? So that the World is *such* an Effect as openly *proclaims* its Cause to be a *God*; and if *this* Evidence of God's Existence will not *convince* Men, they are *impreguably* fortified against *all* Conviction; and if God should carry them into those *infinite Spaces* that are *beyond* the Limits of this World, and there command a *New* One into Being, while they stood *looking on*, and *saw* it springing out of nothing, they might with as good reason conclude *that* World to be nothing but a *fortuitous* Concourse of *insensible* Parts of Matter, as they now do that *this* is so. So that in fine, he that *denies* God after all these *Demonstrations* which he hath given of himself, is out of the *reach* of Argument, and if he *pursue* his own *Principles*, can *never* be convinced by any *possible* Reasons. And what a desperate Folly is it for Men to embrace a Belief, which should they be *mistaken*, draws after it *everlasting* Ruin, when they have all the Reasons to the *contrary* that the Matter is *capable* of? What is this but to shut their *Eyes*, and cast themselves *blindfold* on their own *Destruction*, and to resolve to *wink hard* and believe

against all possible Reason, that so they may ruin themselves without any *Interruption*?

VI. And lastly, The Atheist plainly *contradicts* himself in his *own* Conclusion. For by denying that God is, he necessarily denies the *Possibility* of his Being. For if he be *not*, it is impossible he should *ever* be; because Eternity of Being is included in the *Notion* of him. For when we speak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is *before* all Causes, and the *Cause* of all Causes, and that therefore *oweth* not his Being to any *prior* Cause, but doth *necessarily*, *independently*, and *eternally* exist. So that if he be not *now*, he cannot be *at all*, because he must begin to be, which is contradictory to the very essential *Notion* and *Idea* of him. For if he should ever *begin* to be, he cannot be *Eternal*; and if he be not *Eternal* he cannot be *God*. So that to say God is *not*, is by necessary Consequence to say he *cannot* be at all; and yet by a God we mean at the same time a *Being that is endowed with all possible Perfections that a Being is capable of*. Wherefore as by saying that God is *not*; we do by Consequence assert that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be, we do in effect assert this gross Contradiction; that it is impossible *such* a Being should ever *be* as includes all the *Perfections* that are *possible* to a Being. Thus in the same breath we pronounce that God *can* and *cannot* be, that it is *possible* he is, and yet *impossible* he should ever be. For by saying that he is a Being endowed with all the *possible* Perfections of a Being, we expressly affirm that it is possible he *may* be; but by saying, that there is *no* such Being *actually* existing, we do as expressly assert

assert that it is *impossible* he should ever be. He therefore who asserts that God is *not*, doth by necessary consequence assert this *express* Contradiction, *that it is impossible there should ever be a Being as perfect as it is possible.* And when if there be a God, Men's eternal Fate depends but upon *believing* that he *is*, and *acting* accordingly, what a monstrous Folly is it for Men to *contradict* themselves to *deny* him? What is this but to *stake* their Souls upon it, that the very *first Principle* of Reasoning is *false*, and put their Fate upon this *desperate* Issue, that unless *both* Parts of a *Contradiction* prove *true*, they must *inevitably* perish for ever?

And now having shewn you from what *malignant* Causes Atheism springs, and how desperately *foolish* and *unreasonable* it is in itself, let us all endeavour by the *serious* Consideration of what hath been said, to *fortify* our Minds against it. And since this Proposition, That *God is*, is the prime Foundation of *all* Religion, it concerns us all to use our utmost Diligence to *establish* our Minds in the *firm* and *steadfast* Belief of it; and *this* we cannot fail to *do*, if we heartily *endeavour* it. For the Arguments of God's Being do shine all round about us with such a *clear* and *convincing* Light, that we need do no more than just *open* our *Eyes* to it, and *dispel* those mischievous Causes from our *Wills*, that *hide* and *obscure* it from our *Understandings*. And when once we have thoroughly *settled* the *Belief* of God's Being in our *Minds*, it will mightily *influence* all our Powers of *Action*; it will *invite* our Hope, and

alarm our Fear, and *Address* to every *Passion* in us that is capable of *Persuasion*, and be an *ever-living* Spring of Religion within us; for God is an Object so infinitely *Great* in *himself*, and of such infinite *Moment* and *Concernment* to us, that it is next to *impossible* we should *firmly* believe that he is, without being *vigorously* impressed with *religious* Affections upon the Consideration of his *Being*.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Necessity of acknowledging the divine Providence to oblige us to be truly Religious.

TH E main *Influence* which the *Belief* of a God hath upon the Minds of Men proceeds immediately from the *Belief* of his *Providence*, without *which* we are no way concerned or *interested* in him. For a God without a *Providence* is a *solitary* kind of Being that lives *alone* from the World, altogether *retired* within himself, and never *looks abroad* or any ways *intermeddles* with any thing *without*; and what have we to do with a *Being* that hath nothing to do with us or our *Affairs*, but lives *apart* from us in some *inaccessible* Retirement, where neither we can go to him nor he come to us? So that it is by his *Providence* that all *Correspondence* and *Intercourse* between God and his Creatures is *maintained*; which being taken away, he is nothing to us, and we are as nothing to him. For what doth it signify to us that there is a certain *excellent* Being called God, sitting on the Top of the Heavens with his Arms *folded* in his Bosom, and who doth nothing there but *enjoy* himself in a *quiet* Contemplation of his own Perfections, without regarding any thing *without* him, or doing either *good* or *hurt* to the World? Such a God is nothing but a great *Cypher* in the World, that only makes a *glorious*

Flourish, but is as *insignificant* as *no* God at all. For to what purpose should we *pray* to a God that is not at leisure to *bear* us, or *hope* in a God that is not concerned to *help* us? What should move us to *love* a God that bestows no *Good*, or to *fear* a God that inflicts no *Evil*, or to *obey* a God that hath no *Regard* of our *Actions*? Why should we *thank* him if we *receive* nothing from him? For what should we *praise* him if he be no ways *beneficial* to the World? And wherein should we *imitate* him if he sits *still* and does *nothing*, and exercises neither *Wisdom*, nor *Goodness*, nor *Justice*, nor *Mercy* towards anything without him? All which *Perfections* of the Deity without a *Providence* are utterly *void* and *useless*. For his *Providence* is the great *Sphere of Activity* wherein he *exercises* and *displays* his *Perfections*, wherein his *Power* executes the *Contrivances* of his *Wisdom*, and his *Wisdom* contrives the *Methods* of his *Goodness*; so that without his *Providence* all his *Perfections* will signify *nothing*. For what doth that *Wisdom* signify that *contrives* nothing? Or that *Power* which *doth* nothing? Or that *Goodness* that is *good* for nothing? Or that *Justice* which *distributes* nothing? And yet just such *Cyphers* are all the *Perfections* of God, suppose there is no *Providence* wherein to *employ* and *exercise* them. And if once we *vacate* and *extinguish* these *Perfections* of God which are the *Graces* which render him so *sublime* and *adorable*, what *Reason* can move us to *adore* and worship him? For why should we concern our *selves* with a God who concerns *himself* with no *Body*, and that either hath neither
Power,

Power, nor *Wisdom*, nor *Goodness*, or which to us is the *same*, makes no *use* of them? So that the *Denial* of God's *Providence*, you see, directly cuts in sunder all the *Ties* of Religion, by rendering him an *insignificant* Being to the World.

In the Prosecution of this Argument I shall shew, First, *What* of the *Divine Providence* it is that is *necessary* to be *believed* in order to our being *truly religious*. Secondly, *What Evidence* there is to *create* in us *this* Belief. Thirdly, The *Insufficiency* and *Unreasonableness* of the common Pretences to *Infidelity* in this Matter.

S E C T. I.

What it is we are to believe of the Divine Providence.

IN general it is not *sufficient* that we believe *this* or *that* Part or Branch of it, but we must acknowledge the *Whole*; every *Part* whereof the *Whole* consists being *pregnant* with very *powerful* Obligations to Religion. Now the *Whole* of *Providence* consists in God's continual *Conservation*, *Possession*, *Inspection*, and *Disposal* of all Things, and *Government* of the rational World. So that the *Whole* of it includes these five Parts or Branches.

I. God's continual *Conservation* of all Things.

II. His continual *Possession* of all Things.

III. His

III. His continual *Inspection* of all Things.

IV. His continual *Ordering* and *Disposal* of all Things.

V. His continual *Government* of the rational World. All which, as I shall shew, are highly *necessary* to be *believed* in order to our being *truly religious*.

I. To oblige us to be *truly religious*, it is necessary we should believe that God continually *upholds* and *conserves* all Things. That he alone is the great *Atlas* on whose Almighty Shoulders the whole Frame of Things *depends*. For though the Works of *human Art* do often stand many Ages after the Workman's Hand is *withdrawn* from them, yet the Reason is because there is *something* between *them* and *nothing*; viz. the *pre-existing Matter* of which they are formed; whereas the Works of God being all produced out of *nothing*, have nothing between them, but that *creative Power* which produced them. And therefore as *Man's Work* would necessarily perish were that *pre-existing Matter* taken away, which stands between *them* and *nothing*, so *God's Works* would necessarily resolve into nothing, should that *creative Power* be withdrawn which stands between *them* and *nothing*. In short, *pre-existing Matter* is the Basis of *our Works*, and *creative Power* of *God's*; and therefore as *our Works* must cease to be, were their *pre-existing Matter* withdrawn, so *God's Works* must cease to be, were his *creative Power* withdrawn. So that it is the same Almighty Power which *raised* the World out of nothing that keeps it from *sinking into* nothing; and that it is this Mo-

ment is as much the Effect of Divine Power, as that it *was* the Moment when it was first created. For the World was no more able to give itself the *second* Moment of Being than it was the *first*, and the *third* than the *second*, and so on through all the *past* and *future* Moments of its Being. For *one* Moment of Being is as much as *another*, and therefore to give a *second* requires the same Power as to give a *first*; and if so, then each *succeeding* Moment of the World's *Duration* and *Continuance*, must be derived from the Cause of the *first* Moment of its *Being*. So that the *Creation* and *Conservation* of the World, is only the *same* Act *continuing* and *flowing* on (like a *Line* from a *Mathematical Point*) from the *first* Instant of its *Being* to the *last* Period of its *Duration*. And so the Scripture represents it: Thus *Nehemiah* ix. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all; and Acts* xvii. 25. 28. *He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, in him we live, and move, and have our being; and Heb.* i. 3. he is said to *uphold all things by the word of his Power*.

Which is a Truth of that vast *Importance* to Religion, that it is hardly conceivable how it can *subsist* without it. For while we look on ourselves as Beings that are *independent* from God, that do live, and breath, and *subsist* of *ourselves*, without any new *Supplies* of Being from *him*, why should we *serve* and *worship* him? What Reason have we to *trust* in a Being from whom we expect no *Support*? Or to render *Homage* to a Being on whom we have no *Dependence*? So that by *disbelieving*

believing this Part of the *Divine Providence*, we do in effect cut off all *Intercourse* between God and ourselves, and lay an *Embargo* on Religion. For if we depend not on him, what have we to *do* with him? And if we *owe* not our *Lives* and *Beings* to his Power, what Right hath he to *exact* our *Obedience*? But while we look upon ourselves as Being that *hang* upon him, and *derive* every Breath and Moment of our Beings from him, so that should he *withdraw* from us that Almighty Arm that *sustains* us, and leave us to *subsist* of *ourselves*, we must presently *drop* into nothing, how can we forbear without infinite *Stupidity* and *Ingratitude*, to devote *ourselves* and all our *Powers* and *Faculties* to his Service? For what a *stupid* Wretch should I be, should I not study to please *him* upon whom I know my *Life* and *Being* depends, and who merely by *withdrawing* his Hand from underneath me can let me *sink* into nothing when he pleases? And what an *ungrateful* Wretch should I be, should I refuse to *honour*, *worship*, and *obey*, him, from whom I draw *every* Breath I breathe, and derive *new* Life and Being every Moment?

II. It is also necessary we should believe that God *possesses* all Things; that he hath not *given away* this World from himself, and cast it out of his own *Disposal* as a common *Scramble* among Men; but that he hath *reserved* to himself an *absolute*, *unalienable* and *independent* Propriety in all that we *enjoy* and *possess*. For all Things *owe* their Being to *him*, as he is the *Creator* and *Upholder* of them; and therefore whatsoever *is* must necessarily be *his*, because it *is* by his *Power* and *Providence*. And if *we* who act by the Power of God, and can do nothing

thing *without* him, may claim a Right to the Effects of our *Invention* and *Industry*, how much more may God who *contrived* and *produced* all Things by his own *independent* Wisdom and Power? For *our* Wisdom and Power being God's, he hath a *Sovereign Right* to all the *Effects* of them; but *his* Wisdom and Power are absolutely *his own*, without Dependance on any *superior Cause*; and therefore whatsoever are the Effects of them must necessarily be *his* by a most *absolute* and *independent* Propriety. And accordingly he is stiled *the possessor of heaven and earth*, Gen. xiv. 19. And *Moses* tells his People, *Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's, the earth also, and all that is therein*, Deut. x. 14. and *the earth*, saith the Psalmist, *is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon the sea, and prepared it upon the floods*, Psalm xxiv. 1. and l. 12. and *the heavens*, saith he again, *are thine, the earth also is thine; as for the world and the fulness thereof thou hast founded them*, Psalm lxxxix. 11.

God therefore being the *Supreme Proprietor* of the World, there is nothing can be justly *ours* but by *his* Will and Grant; and nothing can be ours by *his* Will, but what is *honestly* and *justly* ours. So that for us to *seize* upon any Part of the World by *Fraud*, or *Violence*, or *Oppression*, is to *trespass* upon God and *invade* his Property, and to *tear* his *World* from him against his *Will*. Thus whatsoever we possess by *Wrong*, we possess as *Robbers* and *Invaders* of God, and whatsoever we enjoy by *Right*, we enjoy as *Tenants* to the great *Landlord* of the World; and without *owning* and *acknowledging*

knowledging this we cannot be *truly religious*. For if the World be not *his*, why should we *pray* to him for what we *want* of it, or *praise* him for what we *enjoy*? why should we patiently *submit* to his Disposal when he *deprives* us of what we *have*? Or thankfully *acknowledge* his Goodness when he *supplies* us with what we *need*? Why should we employ our *Possessions* in *his* Service, or think ourselves obliged to *return* him any part of them in *pious* or *charitable* Works? In a Word, why should we be *contented* with a *small* Share, and abide by that *unequal* Division of Things that is made in the World, and not endeavour to *increase* our own poor Heap by *pilfering* from other Men's that are ten times bigger than ours? Whence are *these* Obligations but from this *Supposal*, that God is the supreme *Proprietor* and *Possessor* of all Things; which being denied, there remains no *solid* Foundation of Reason for any of these *great* and *necessary* Duties of Religion.

III. To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is also necessary we should believe that God is *present* with and *inspects* all Things, that his Divine Substance is *diffused* through and *circumfused* about all Things, so as to *penetrate* them *within* as an universal Soul, and *contain* them *without* as an universal Place. For so the Jewish Doctors are wont to call God *Hamakom*, that is to say, the *Place* or *Continent* of all Things, because all Things are *encompassed* by him, and do live and move *within* his infinite Bosom. For so in Scripture the Divine Substance is described, as spreading itself *through* and *around* the World, even to the utmost *Possibility* of *Extension*. *Whither*, saith the Psalmist, *shall I go from thy*

thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there, if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there; if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy Right-hand shall hold me, Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10. And behold, saith Solomon, the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, 1 Kings viii. 27. yea do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord himself, Jer. xxiii. 24.

Now though God's *Omnipresence* be strictly an Attribute of his *Essence*, and not a Part of his *Providence*, yet it is such an Attribute as includes his *universal Providence*, and without supposing of which, an universal Providence can hardly be conceived. For if he *co-exists* and be *present with* all things, he must be supposed to *operate* upon them; because wherever *he* is, his infinite Wisdom and Power and Goodness *are*; which in their own Nature are such *active* Perfections as cannot be present where such a World of things are to be done, and *sit still* and *do nothing*. For how can we conceive that infinite *Wisdom* should be present where a world of things are to be *ordered*, and yet *order* nothing? That infinite *Power* should be present where a world of things are to be *done*, and yet *do* nothing? Or that infinite *Goodness* should be present where a world of *good* is to be done, and *do no good* at all? Such an *idle, restive* Presence as this, is utterly inconsistent with such *active* Perfections. So that the *Omnipresence* of an infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* necessarily supposes an *universal Providence*, and without such an *Omnipresence* an universal Providence can hardly be

be conceived. For how can God be present by any *Power*, or *Virtue*, or *Efficacy*, of his Nature, in any place from whence the real *Substance* of his *Divinity* is excluded? How can he operate by his own immediate *Efficiency* where he is not? Or extend his divine *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* over all things, except his divine *Substance* in which these Attributes are, be *co-extended* with them? Every Agent must be where it *acts*, because it *acts* from its *Being*, and it is as possible for that which is *not* to *operate*, as for that which is to operate where it is *not*; and hence *Socrates* being asked how it was possible for *one* God to order all the Affairs of the World? returns this Answer, Τοσῆτον καὶ τοιῶτόν ἐστι τὸ Θεῖον ὅσθ' ἀπαντα ὁρᾶν καὶ πάντα ἀκρίβειν, καὶ παταχεῖ παρεῖναι καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, *i. e.* God is so great and vast a Being, as that he *bears* and *sees* all things together, and is present *every where*, and takes care of all things at the *same time*. Thus God's *Omnipresence*, you see, doth so include his *universal Providence*, that *with* it it is *necessary*, and *without* it *inconceivable*.

And then from his Presence *with* all things, necessarily follows his *Inspection* of all things; because wherever he is, his *infinite Knowledge* is, which is *inseparable* from his Being; and wherever his infinite Knowledge is, it must necessarily have a *thorough* Prospect of all things round about him, so that nothing can be *concealed* from its *Inspection*. For so the Scripture assures us that *the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth*, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. and that *the Eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and good*, Prov. xv. 3. and in a word, that *all things are open*
and

and naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13.

Both which are Truths of vast Importance to Religion. For while Men look upon God as a Being that dwells at a great Distance from them, they will be ready enough to conclude *Procul à Jove procul à Fulmine*, that being far off from him, they are out of his *Reach*, and beyond the *Danger* of his *Thunder-bolts*; and that he is too far removed from them either to succour them when they want his *Aid*, or to punish them when they deserve his *Displeasure*; which must needs extinguish both their *Hope* and *Fear*, which are the Master-springs of their Religion. And though we should believe him to be present with us, yet unless we also believe that he hath a full Inspection into all our *Actions* and *Affairs*, we shall have no Regard to him. For if he sees not into our Affairs, how can he succour and relieve us? And if he cannot relieve us, to what End should we hope in him, depend upon him, or pray to him? And unless he hath a perfect Insight in all our Actions, how should he reward or punish us? and if he cannot reward us, what should encourage, if he cannot punish us, what should terrify us to our Duty to him? But if we look upon him as a Being that is always with us, and wherever we are surrounds us with his boundless Presence; that includes and penetrates every Part of our Substance, sees into our inmost Thoughts and Purposes, and ransacks every Corner of our Souls with his all-seeing *Eye*, and hath a thorough and perfect Prospect of all our *Affairs* and *Concerns*, we cannot without in-

finite *Force* to our Reason forbear *fearing*, and *reverencing*, *servi*ng and *adori*ng him.

IV. To fasten the Obligation of Religion upon us it is also necessary that we believe that God continually orders and disposes of all Things; that he is the *Spring* of all the Motions of this great *Machine* of the World, that sets every *Wheel* and *Cause* a-going, and by his all-commanding Influence maintains, directs and over-rules their Motions; and that there is nothing happens in the World, whether by *Nature*, or *Chance*, or *Design*, but by his *Ordination* and *Disposal*; that even those natural *Causes* which are necessarily determined to such particular Courses and Effects, are influenced and conducted by him, and that whensoever they stray from their Courses, suspend or precipitate their Motions, or move counter to their natural Tendencies, it is by his *Order* and *Direction*; that it is he who derives and guides the Heavenly Bodies, impresses the Degrees and chalks out the Paths of their Motions, and by his own Almighty Hand turns round those stupendous Wheels in a perpetual Revolution. For so the Scripture tells us, that *he makes his Sun to shine upon the good and bad*, Mat. v. 45. that it is at his *Beck* and *Command* that those vast Bodies of Light exhale the Vapours of the Earth and Sea, and dissolve them down again in *Hail*, and *Rain*, and *Snow*. For so we are told that it is *he who covers the heavens with Clouds, and prepares the Rain for the earth; that sends forth his commandment unto the earth; and giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar frost like ashes, and casteth forth his Ice like morsels, and sendeth forth his*
word

word and melteth them, and causes the wind to blow and the waters flow, Ps. cxlvii. 8, 15, 16, 17, 18. that the fire, and hail, and snow, and vapours, and strong winds do fulfil his word, Ps. cxlviii. 8. And in a Word, that it is by his Order and Influence that the Earth sends up its Sap into the Seeds and Roots of Herbs, and Corn, and Plants, and causes them to spring and grow, and that all Animals do propagate their Kind, and still replenish the Store-houses of Nature; for so we are told, that he cloaths the grass of the field, and arrays the lilies in all their glory, Matt. ii. 28, 29, 30. and that he causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the use of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, Ps. civ. 14.

And then as for fortuitous and casual Events, which depend upon accidental and irregular Causes, as a Man's being *hit* with an Arrow let fly at random, or *brained* with a Stone falling from the Top of an House, we must believe that they are all ordered, directed, and over-ruled by God; so as that to *him* there is nothing casual or contingent; and tho' there are many Things happen of which there was no Necessity in their immediate Causes, yet do they as necessarily depend upon the Will and Power of the first Cause of all, as the *Rising* and *Setting* of the Sun, and *Ebbing* and *Flowing* of the Sea. So that how fortuitous soever these Things may be, in respect of the *Design* and natural *Tendency* of second Causes, yet none of them ever happen besides the *Purpose* and *Intention* of God, who foresees and designs them before they come to pass, and directs and levels them to his own most *wise* and *holy* Ends and Purposes. For so the Arrow which the Soldier let fly at random

was levelled by God at *Abab's* Breast, so that his Death was *Chance* in respect of the *Soldier* who shot the Arrow, but *Design* in God who directed it; and accordingly, *Prov. xvi. 33.* we are told that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* And so in the Case of *Chance-Medley*, when a Man accidentally kills another without any *Design* or *Intention*, though it be mere *Accident* in him, it is *Council* and *Design* in God, who, as the Scripture expresses it, *delivers the man he slays into his hand, Exod. xxi. 13.*

And then Lastly, As for those Events which happen by the *Design* of free and rational Agents, it is necessary we should believe that they are *all* over-ruled by God too; that whatever befalls us in this World, whether it be by the good or ill *Design* of Men or Angels, is for good, and just, and holy Ends, either permitted or determined by the sovereign Disposer of all *Events*; so that without his wise Permission or Determination, neither *Angels, Men, nor Devils* can do us either *Good* or *Hurt*; that every good Thing we receive from them, only passes to us through their Hands from God, and that they are only the *Channels* and *Conveyances* of the over-flowing Streams of his infinite Bounty; and that whenever we suffer any *ill* from them, they are but the *Rods* in God's *Hand* wherewith he chastens and corrects us; that he hath the over-ruling Disposal of all the *Ills* which they inflict upon us, and can render their *Stings* a sovereign *Balm*, and the *rankest Poison medicinal* to us; so that the *Malice* being in God's Disposal, can effect nothing but what he will have it; and if it doth us hurt it is his *Executioner*,
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but if he pleases it shall do good, and like *Leaches* applied by a skilful Physician, that draw away our *Disease* while it is sucking our *Blood*. For so God made the *Malice* of *Joseph's* Brethren the Means of his *Advancement* in *Egypt*; and by the *Covetousness* of *Judas* and *Cruelty* of the *Jews* advanced the Holy *Jesus* to his own Right-hand, and executed his Purpose to redeem Mankind. Thus God overrules the Actions of Men, and when he pleases directs them quite contrary to their Intentions; for *the way of man*, saith the Prophet, *is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, Jer. x. 23. It is the *Man* that walks and acts, but it is *God* alone that leads his Way, and directs his Actions to what End he pleases.

All which it is necessary we should believe in order to our being *truly Religious*. For while we look upon God as a *Foreigner* in the World, that hath altogether retired himself from the *Affairs* of it, and abandoned it to the Disposal of blind *Chance* or *Necessity*, he must stand for a *Cypher* in our *Esteem*, and signify no more to us than the *Emperor* of the *World in the Moon*, who for all we know may be a glorious and puissant Prince, but is so far removed from us and our *Affairs*, that he can do us neither *Good* nor *Hurt*. And if God intermeddle not with those *Goods* and *Evils* which happen here below, what doth he signify to us who live apart from him in another World from which he is wholly retired and withdrawn? But if we firmly believe that there is nothing befalls us whether it be in the Course of *Nature* or by *Chance*, or *Design*, but by his *Order* and *Direction*, we

must lay aside our *Reason* and *Humanity*, if for every Good we want, or do receive, we do not apply ourselves to him with humble, and submissive, thankful and ingenuous Minds ; and if under every *Evil* that we feel or fear, we do not resign up our *Wills* and lift up our *Eyes* to him, as to the sole *Arbitrator* of our *Fate*. For where should we *pay* our *Thanks*, or whence should we expect our *Supplies* and *Deliverances*, but to him who is the *Fountain* of all *Good*, and from him who is the supreme Moderator of all *Events*? Who is there in *Heaven* or *Earth* whom we are so much concerned to please, and so much obliged to acknowledge and submit to, so much engaged to trust to and rely on ; as him who hath all our *Fortunes* in his *Hands*, and the absolute *Disposal* of every Thing in which we are, or may, or can be any way interested or concerned ? So that the *Belief* of God's over - ruling *Providence* hath every Link of our Duty fastened to it in a strong and rational Concatenation, and if it be loosened from this Principle, the whole Chain must necessarily fall in sunder.

V. And lastly, To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is also necessary we should believe God that is the supreme Governor of the *rational World*, which is a distinct Branch of Providence from the former. For *all* Things whatsoever are subject to God's *Order* and *Disposal*, but in strictness of Speech it is only *rational Beings* that are subject to his Government. For Government supposes *Laws*, and *Laws Rewards* and *Punishments*, or which *rational Beings* alone are capable, they alone having the Power to deliberate, and upon

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Deliberation to choose what is Good, and refuse what is Evil, without which no Being can deserve either to be rewarded or punished. So that the Government of God, in Strictness of Speech, respects only the *rational World* consisting of *Angels* and *Men*.

As for the Government of *Angels* it is impossible we should understand any more of it than what God hath revealed, because though they converse with us and our Affairs, yet we do not converse with them; our *spiritual Nature* by which we are near allied to them being shut up in *Matter*, which like a *Wall of Partition* divides us from them, and hinders us from looking over into their World, and from seeing their *Nature* and *Operations*, and *surveying* their *Polity* and *Government*. Indeed so far as we understand their *Natures*, we may easily understand the *Laws* by which God *governs* them; because we know God's *Laws* are always adapted to the *Natures* of Things; and consequently since we know that they are rational Creatures, we may conclude from thence, that whatsoever is fit and decorous for rational Creatures as such, they stand obliged to by the *Law* of their *Natures*. But since there are particular Powers and Properties in their *Natures* which we understand not, it is impossible we should understand all the particular *Laws* by which they are governed. Only thus much in general we know, that the whole Order of *Angelical Beings* were from the first Moment of their Creation subjected to *Laws* fitted to their *Nature*; by which *natural Laws* they stood obliged to obey their Creator in all his positive Commands and In-

stitutions ; and that these Laws, whatsoever they were, both natural and positive, were established in *Rewards* and *Punishments*, by which if they continued *Obedient* they were to continue for ever in their most blissful Ranks and Stations ; but if they rebelled were immediately to be banished thence into everlasting *Wretchedness* and *Misery* ; that a certain *Order* of these *Angelical Beings*, excited either by their *Pride*, or *Envy*, or sensual *Affections*, did under their Head or Chieftain revolt from God by transgressing some natural or positive Law, for which they were expelled the high Territories of Happiness, and driven into these lower Parts of the World, where under the Prince of their Rebellion they have ever since waged War against *God* and *Man* ; that in this State of War they are under the *Restraint* of God's Almighty Power, who sets Bounds to their Power and Malice which it cannot pass, and determine it to what *Ends* and *Purposes* he pleases ; employing it sometimes to try and chasten good Men, sometimes to execute his Wrath upon the *Children* of *Disobedience*, and sometimes again letting it loose merely to display his own Almighty Power in its *Defeat* and *Overthrow* ; in which State they are reserved as Prisoners at large to the *Judgment* of the *great Day* ; whereby, together with wicked Men, they shall be *sentenced* and *confined* to everlasting *Flames* and *Darkness* ; that the good Angels in reward of their constant Obedience are continued and fixed in a most blissful Condition, in which they enjoy the constant Smiles of God, and the unspeakable Pleasure of being entirely resigned to his Will, who upon all Occasions sends them

to and fro in the World, as the great *Messengers* and *Ministers* of his Providence, to *minister* to the recovery of recoverable Sinners, and to pour out the *Vials* of his *Wrath* upon the *Obstinate* and *Unreclaimable*; to assist, protect and comfort good Men while they live, and when they depart from hence to conduct their Spirits thro' the airy *Territories* of the wicked Angels into those *blissful Mansions* that are prepared to receive them till the *Resurrection*; at which Time their Part will be to *summon* and *gather* both the *good* and *bad* before the Tribunal of Christ, to receive their final Sentence to everlasting *Weal* or *Woe*.

This is the *main* of what we know concerning God's *Government* of *Angels*; the sincere Belief of which will be of vast Advantage to us in the whole Course of our Religion. For since there is such a mighty *Colony* of evil Angels roving about the World, watching all Opportunities to lay *Snarés* in our Way, and to tempt us into their *Revolt* and *Ruin*; and since their *Design* in tempting us now, is only to get us into their *Power*, that so they may torment us hereafter, how much doth it concern us to guard and defend ourselves against their evil *Motions* and *Suggestions*, lest by complying with them we give them Opportunity to train us on from one Degree of Wickedness to another, till they have made us provoke the Almighty to cut us off, and abandon us for ever to their Rage and Fury; and since they are all of them under his *Restraint*, and can proceed no farther in their *mischievous* Designs against us, than he lets loose his Chain to them, how should this encourage us manfully to *struggle* and *contend* against them; since if

we do we may depend upon it, that *God* in whose Power they are, will either command them off, or at least not permit them to over-power us with Temptation. And since by *God's* Permission there are great Flocks of good Angels always hovering about us, to guard us against those malignant ones, and to prompt us to Good, as they prompt us to Evil, and with their holy Inspirations to counterminish their impure Suggestions, how much doth it import us to cherish and reverence every pious *Thought* and *Motion*, since for all we know it may be the *Whisper* of some *Angel of God*, who by these and such like holy Injunctions is now struggling with the Powers of Darkness, to rescue our Souls out of their Hands? And since these blessed and benevolent Spirits do by *God's* Appointment pitch their Tents about good Men, while they live, and convoy them safely to the *Seat* of the *Blessed* when they die, how should this encourage bad Men to be good, and good Men to persevere in well doing; since they place and continue themselves under the blessed *Patronage* of Angels, to be conducted safely by them through this perilous Sea to the calm Regions of eternal *Light*? Thus the Belief of *God's* Government of *Angels*, so far as he hath thought good to reveal it to us, very much conduces to a *holy Life*.

But that which more nearly concerns us, and hath a more immediate Influence on our Practice, is his Government of Men; the *Belief* of which is indispensably necessary to render us *truly religious*. Now concerning this Government of *God* over Men, there are seven Things necessary to be believed :

I. That the great *End* of God's Government is the *Welfare* of *Mankind*.

II. That in order to this *End*, God hath given us *Laws* for the *Regulation* and *Government* of our *Actions*.

III. That to secure our Obedience to these *Laws* he hath derived his Authority upon all *lawful Sovereignities* to govern us according to them.

IV. That he is ready to contribute to us all *necessary Assistance*, to enable us to observe these *Laws*.

V. That the *Assistance* he contributes to us is such as supposes us free *Agents*, and concurs with and maintains our *natural Freedom*.

VI. That he takes particular Cognizance of the good and ill Use which we make of our *natural Freedom*.

VII. That he will certainly *reward* or *punish* us *accordingly*.

I. To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is necessary we should believe that the great *End* of God's governing us is our *Welfare* and *Happiness*. That being infinitely raised above all *Want* and *Indigence*, he doth not assume the Government of us to advance himself, or to gratify any boundless *Ambition* of his own, which is a Vice that springs out of *Poverty* and *Indigence*, and therefore can have neither *Root* nor *Room* in a nature so infinitely happy as *his*; but that all his Design in reigning over us is to do us good, and to consummate our *Happiness*; to restore and rectify our disordered Nature, and to advance and raise it to the utmost *Perfection*,

Perfection, and *Bliss* and *Glory* it is capable of; to protect and defend us against present Evils, and support us under them, and convert them into Instruments of good, and to rescue us from that worst of Evils, *Sin*, and from all those endless Miseries it is pregnant with. This we ought to believe is the great Scope of all his Acts of Government, and even of the direct *Punishments* he inflicts; which are always intended either to reclaim the Offenders themselves, or to warn others by the sad Example of their *Suffering* not to follow the ill Example of their *Sin*. And that this is the great End of his Government he himself hath expressly declared. So *Psal.* cxxxv. 9. we are assured that *the Lord is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works*; and *Ver.* 13. 14. that in the Exercise of *his everlasting kingdom, he upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that are bowed down*; and tho' in the *Administration* of his Government, he hath decreed to cut off all such obstinate Rebels as will not be reduced by the Methods of his Love, yet he hath declared that *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*, 2 *Pet.* iii. 9. and that *he would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth*, 1 *Tim.* ii. 4. And unless we believe him to be a benevolent Governour, that aims at the *Good* of his Subjects, we shall look upon his Government as a cruel Tyranny erected for no other End but to squeeze and oppress us, to intral our Liberty, and rob us of the Rights of our Nature, and to chain us down to an endless and careles Toil and Wretchedness; and whilst we thus look upon it, it is impossible we should ever
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submit to it with that generous *Freedom* and *Cbearfulness* that true Religion requires. But if we firmly believe that the great Design of it is to promote our welfare both here and hereafter, we have all the reason in the World to covet to be Governed by *God*, and to receive *his Yoke* as a mighty *Grace* and *Favour*.

II. To oblige us to be truly religious, it is also necessary we should believe that God hath given us Laws for the Regulation and Government of our Actions. For without *Laws* to direct Men what to *do*, and what to *avoid*, there can be no such thing as Government, the proper business of which is to regulate Men's Actions, and without a *Rule* there can be no *Regulation*; so that divine *Rules* or *Laws* are necessarily included in the divine *Rule* or *Government*; and as God cannot be supposed to give *Laws* without *Governing*, so neither can he be supposed to *Govern* without giving *Laws*; so that unless we believe that God governs us by *Laws*, we are utterly destitute both of all reason why, and of all Direction wherein to obey him, and have neither *Motive* to enforce, nor *Measure* to regulate our Obedience. And as it is necessary we should believe that he hath given us *Laws*, so it is also necessary we should believe that those Laws are for our good; that he neither imposed them on us *pro imperio*, as arbitrary *Tests* and Trials of our Obedience, nor exacts them of us to serve himself and advance his own Interest and Greatness, but that the great Design of them is to do us good, and to direct our Actions to our own Interest; to render our Lives placid and easy, and to perfect and glorify our Natures. For while we
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look upon the *Matter* of God's Law either as indifferent in *itself*, and imposed upon us by *him* for no other end but to shew his *absolute Sovereignty* over us, or as beneficial only to him, and imposed upon us merely to promote his *Interest*, it is impossible we should ever comply with it with a *free* and *cheerful* Mind. We may haply obey him out of *Fear* and *Dread*, because he is too *mighty* for us, and not to be *contended* with, without infinite *Peril* and *Disadvantage*; but it is impossible we should obey those Laws with a resigned and cheerful Will, from which we only fear *ill*, but expect no *benefit*. Wherefore to oblige us to render a *free* and *unforced* Submission to God's Laws, it is absolutely necessary we should believe that the great Design of them is the good of those they are imposed on; and so the Psalmist assures us that *the statutes of the Lord are perfect, converting the soul, and making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightning the Eyes; true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey comb, and that in keeping them there is great reward.* Psalm xix. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. and that *the law of God's mouth was better to him, that is, for the good it did him, than thousands of gold and silver,* Psalm cxix. 72.

And this if we firmly believe it will infinitely encourage our *Obedience*. For when I am sure that God commands me nothing but what my own *Health* and *Ease* and *Happiness* requires, and that every Law of his is both a *necessary* and a *Sovereign* Prescription against the *Diseases* of my Nature, and that he could not have prescribed me less than
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he hath without being defective in his Care of my *Recovery* and *Happiness*, with what *Prudence* or *Modesty* can I grudge to *obey* him? How can I think much to serve *him*, when I serve *myself* by it to the best purpose in the World? Or why should I so much as wish that he had not imposed *this* or *that* Law on me when I knew he imposed it to no other End but to oblige me to be *happy*, and that he cannot Dispense with any Duty he requires of me without giving me leave to be *miserable*? When therefore God's Authority doth thus strike in with our Interest, and walk hand in hand with it thro' every Duty it imposes, by refusing to obey him we fight against *ourselves*, and renounce *his* Authority and *our own* Happiness together.

III. To oblige us to be truly religious it is also necessary we should believe that to secure our Obedience to these Laws, God hath derived his own Authority upon all lawful *sovereign Powers*, to govern us according to them. That to promote our Happiness which is the End of his Government; and to secure our *Obedience* to his Laws, which are the Means to that End, he hath established a visible Authority upon Earth to represent his own *invisible Majesty*, and in his Name to exact our Obedience to his Laws, so far as it is liable to their Cognizance; and that the Persons vested with this Authority are exalted by it above all Control or Resistance, and in their several Dominions placed next to and immediately under God, by whose Commission alone they act, and to whose Tribunal alone they are accountable: So that by resisting them, we do as much resist *God*, whose *Deputy Governors* they are, as a *Neapolitan* doth the King

King of *Spain* by levying Arms against his *Vice-Roy* of *Naples*; and by refusing to obey their just and lawful Commands we demur to God's Authority, who in every just thing they impose or require, speaks to us by their Mouths, and commands us by their Laws. For so the Scripture tells us, not only that *they are ordained of God*, and that *to resist them is to resist the Ordinance of God*; not only that they are *the Ministers of God*, and that therefore *for Conscience sake*, or in Reverence to God's Authority which they bear, they are to be obeyed, Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. but that *they judge for God and not for Men*, 2 Chron. xix. 6. and that therefore *their Judgment is God's*, Deut. i. 17.

The Disbelief of which excludes God's Government out of the World, and consequently dissolves all our Obligations of Duty and Allegiance to him. For how can he be supreme Governor of the World, if all other Governments are not immediately under him? and how can they be immediately under him if they are not immediately authorized by him? And by what other Right can any Person or Persons pretend to govern in God's Kingdom under him, but by Commission from him? For every *supreme Authority* is the Head and Fountain of all other Authorities, so far as it extends; and if it be not so, it cannot be supreme. And therefore unless *all Authority* be derived from God, he can have no such thing as a supreme Authority in the World. And this I doubt not is very well understood by our *Atheistical Politicians*, who in pursuance of their Denial of God, derive all Authority from the People; being truly aware that if the Authority of the Governors can be

be derived from the *People*, it will necessarily follow that *both* must be *independent* upon *God*, and that to derive *Authority* to govern from any other *Head* but *God*, is to deny him to be the *supreme Governor* of the *World*, which is the thing they would be at. If it be said, that *God* hath given *Authority* to the *People* to *authorise* their *Governors*, and so he is still *Head* of all *Authority*, tho' it be derived from him *immediately* through the *People*, I answer, That *this* doth very little mend the matter. For if *God* hath given *Authority* to the *People* to *authorise* their *Governors*, he hath in *Effect* given the *Reins* out of his own *Hands*, and left the *People* to govern the *World*. For I would fain know, do *Governors* govern by *God's* *Authority* or the *People's*? If by the *People's*, 'tis the *People* that govern by them and not *God*; if by *God's*, 'tis *God* that governs by them and not the *People*. In short, if they govern by the *People's* *Authority*, they are, as *Governors* at least, *independent* from *God*, and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of the *People*; if by *God's* *Authority*, they are *Independent* from the *People*, and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of *God*. So that whether he *authorises* them *immediately* or by the *People* it is all one, the *Question* being not so much how they are authorized, as by what *Authority* they govern; if it be by *God's*, to *God* alone they are *accountable*; if by the *People*, *God's* *Authority* is quite *excluded* from having any hand in the *Government* of the *World*. In short, If the *Choice* of the *People* make their *Governor* without *God's* *authorising* him, he is the *People's* *Vice-roy* and not *God's*; but if it be *God* that *authorises* him, he is

God's *Vice-roy* and not the *People's*. So that their *choice* even in *Elective* Governments can signify no more than the bare *presenting* of a Person to God to be *authorised* his *Vicegerent* by him : who, if their *Choice* be *just* and *lawful*, is supposed to *consent* and to *approve* it, and thereby to authorize the Person so presented. For *sovereign Authority* in the *Abstract* is *ordained* and *instituted* by God ; but *abstract Authority* cannot govern unless some Person be *vested* with it ; and to vest him with it, he must not only be applied to the *Authority*, but the *Authority* must also be applied to him ; but where the *People* have the *Right of Election*, they only apply the Person to the *Authority*, but it is God's *Consent* and *Approbation* that applies the *Authority* to the Person, who thereupon commences *Supreme* under God, and hath no *superior Tribunal* but God's to account to.

And thus according to the Prophet *Daniel*, the *most High* rules in the *Kingdom of Men*, because as *Lord* of all the *Lords*, and *King* of all the *Kings* of the *Earth*, he rules and governs by their *Ministry*, and they rule and govern by his *Authority*. So that to *secure* and *maintain* the *Obligations* which God's Government of the World devolves upon us, it is *necessary* we should believe that all *rightful Sovereigns* are his *Vicegerents*, and do rule by his *Commission* and *Authority*, and that the *Sword* which they bear is God's, who hath delivered it into their Hands, to *protect* his faithful *Subjects*, and to *execute* his *Wrath*, and to *avenge* his *Authority* upon *Evil* doers. So that we cannot *rebel* against them, nor *willfully* disobey their *just* *Commands*, without giving a *Defiance* to God him-

himself, and rejecting the Yoke of his Government. Whilst therefore we behave ourselves Factiously and Seditiously towards those whom God hath set over us, we live as Out-laws in the Kingdom of God, without any respect to that visible Authority by which he governs the World; and whilst we do so, all our Pretences to Religion are impudent Lies and Impostures.

IV. In order to our being *truly religious* it is also *necessary* we should *believe* that God is ready to *contribute* to us all that *Assistance* which is *necessary* to *enable* us to *observe* his Laws. That whereas in this *corrupt* State of our Nature, we are so *indisposed* to all good by our *carnal Affections* and *vicious Habits*, as that without some *foreign Aid* it is *morally* certain we shall never be *reduced* to a *thorough Compliance* with our Duty, God is *always* ready not only to *second* but to *prevent* our Endeavours, to *inspire* good Thoughts into our *Minds*, and by them to *kindle* devout Affections in our *Wills*, and by them to *excite* us to a *constant* Course of *pious* and *virtuous* Endeavours; and that when he hath proceeded *thus far* with us he doth not presently *abandon* us to ourselves, and leave us to *contend* and *struggle* in vain with *insuperable* Difficulties, but all along *co-operate* with us, *aids* and *assists* our Faculties, and with his *holy Inspirations* *cherishes* our *languishing* Endeavours, 'till they have wrought their way thro' all the *Difficulties* of Religion into a *permanent* State of *Piety* and *Virtue*. So that unless we either turn a *deaf Ear* to those good thoughts he *suggests* to us, and refuse to *listen* to their *Persuasions*, or *quench* those *holy Affections* which

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they kindle in us with earthly Cares and Pleasures, or by wilful sinning harden our Heart against all the *Impressions* of his *Grace*, we shall not fail of being frequently and powerfully excited by him to *Piety* and *Virtue*; and when he thus *excites* us, if we do not wilfully slacken our Endeavours, and basely surrender back ourselves to our *Lusts*, in despite of all our Resolutions and his Persuasions to the contrary, we shall be so effectually and constantly assisted by him, as that it will be impossible for us to fail of *Success*. For thus the Scripture assures us, that *he gives grace to the humble*, 1 Pet. v. 5. and thereby *works in them to will and to do*, Phil. ii. 13. and that to this End *he gives his holy Spirit to every one that asks*, Luke xi. 13. The *Belief* of which is absolutely necessary to oblige us to submit to Religion. For tho' we are naturally free to *Good* as well as *Evil*, yet through the vicious Habits we have generally contracted, either through youthful Levity and Inconsideration, or ill Education and Example, our *Liberty* to *Good* is so straitned and confined, that whenever we attempt to exercise it, we find a prevailing *Bias* on our *Natures*, that carries us the contrary Way, bearing before it all our good Resolutions, and tiring out our short-breath'd Endeavours, so that *the good, we would, we do not, and the evil we would not, we do*. And therefore unless we can depend upon God for *Assistance* against the *Violence* and *Outrage* of our *bad* Inclinations, after we have once struggled with them in vain, and thereby made a woful Experiment of our own *Impotence*, we shall out of mere *Despair* of prevailing against them, give over attempting it, and utterly abandon ourselves to their *Tyranny*. But

But if we firmly believe that *God* who knows *our Weakness* and *our Enemies Strength*, will in Proportion to both readily assist us, whensoever we heartily invoke his Aid, and in *Concurrence* therewith exert our own *Endeavour*, we have all the *Encouragement* in the World to undertake our *Duty*, maugre all the *Difficulties* that attend it. For being assured that *God* will concur with our *Endeavours*, we may depend upon it, that not only our own *Endeavours* are in *our Power*, but *God's Assistance* too, and that the *Corruptions* of our *Nature* do not so much overmatch our *Endeavours*, as *God's Assistance* over-matches those *Corruptions*. So that if we heartily exert our *Endeavour*, we are sure we cannot fail of *Success*, because we know that *God* will assist our *Endeavour*, and that with his *Assistance* we cannot but be victorious. Since therefore the *Grace of God* is as much under the Command of *our Will* as our own *Principles of Action*, it is as much in *our Power* to do that which we cannot do without *God's Grace*, as to do that which we can. And therefore if *God's Grace* be sufficient to supply the *Defect* of our natural *Power*, and enable us to conquer the *Difficulties* of our *Duty*, we are sure there is nothing in it can be too hard for us; because now we can do not only all that we can do by *ourselves*, but also that we can do by the *Grace of God*.

V. To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is also necessary we should believe that the *Assistance* which *God* affords us, is such as supposes us free *Agents*, and concurs with and maintains our natural *Freedom*. That it doth not necessarily determine us to *Good*, but leaves it to our own free *Choice*

to *determine* our selves which way we please ; that as he acts upon *necessary* Agents by a *necessary* Influx and Causality which they cannot *resist*, and *determine* those things to act by *his* Will ; which have no Will of *their own* to *determine* them, so he acts upon *free* Agents by a *free* and *unconstraining* Influence, *i. e.* by *suggesting* Arguments to their *Minds*, to *incline* and *persuade* them, but leaves it to their own *Liberty* to *consider* those Arguments are *not*, and to *comply* with those *Persuasions*, or *reject* them ; and that though as he hath sometimes *suspended* the Powers of *necessary* Agents, and *interrupted* the *natural* Course of their *Motion*, as when he forbade the *Sun* to *move*, and the *Fire* to *burn*, so he hath at other times *restrained* the *natural* Liberty of *free* Agents, and *determined* them by an *over-ruling* Necessity, yet both the *one* and the other are extraordinary and *miraculous* : but that in the *ordinary* Course of his Government, he doth as well leave *free* Agents to that *natural* freedom with which he first *created* them, as *necessary* ones to those *Necessities* which he first *impressed* upon their *Natures*. For his *Providence* is *successaneous* to his *Creation*, and did at first *begin* where that *ended*, and doth still *proceed* as it *began*, ordering and governing all things according to the several *Frames* and *Models*, in which he first *cast* and *created* them. Nor can he order and govern them *otherwise* without unravelling his own *Creation*, and making things to be otherwise than he *first* made them. For how can he ordinarily *necessitate* those Agents whom he first made *free*, without changing their *Natures* from *free* to *necessary*, and making them a *different* kind of Being

than he made them? So that though in the Course of his Government God doth powerfully importune and persuade us, yet he lays no *Necessity* upon our *Wills*, but leaves us free to chuse or refuse; and as the *Temptations of Sin* incline us one way, so the *Grace of God* inclines us another, but *both* leave us to our own Liberty to go which way we please. And this the Scripture plainly asserts, where it makes mention of Men's *resisting the holy Ghost*, Acts vii. 51. and *grieving and quenching the Spirit of God*, Ephes. iv. 30. 1 Thes. v. 19 and *refusing to hear when God calls, and to regard when he stretches forth his Hand*, and of their *setting his Counsel at naught and rejecting his Reproofs*, Prov. i. 24, 25. and in a word, where it makes mention of some Men's baffling and defeating that very Grace which would have conquered and persuaded others, Matt. xi. 21. Which plainly imply that all that Assistance to do our Duty, that God ordinarily vouchsafes us in the Course of his Government, is such as no way determines or necessitates us.

The Belief of which is highly necessary to engage us in the *Service of Religion*. For while Men imagine that their Duty is *such* as they cannot heartily comply with, which being *compelled* to it by an *irresistible Grace*, and that *no* Assistance of God can be sufficient to *this* End, but that which suspends their Liberty to *Evil*, and fatally determines them to *Good*, what should move them to exert their own Endeavour? Why should they watch and pray, and strive and contend against a *corrupt* Nature? For if *God* will make them good *irresistibly*, their Endeavour is *needless*; but if he

will not, it is *Labour in vain*. To what End should they ply the *Oar* to stem the *Tide* of a *degenerate* Nature, since without an irresistible *Gale* from Heaven they shall never *succeed*, and with it they shall whether they *ply* or *no*? So that while Men live in Expectance of an irresistible *Grace* to make them *good*, they quit themselves of all their *Obligations* to a pious and virtuous *Endiavour*: but so long as they believe that God's *Grace* is such as supposes and leaves them *free*, such as they may defeat or prosper by the good or ill Use of their Liberty, they cannot but discern themselves infinitely obliged to co-operate with it, to listen and consent to its blessed *Motions* and *Persuasions*, and constantly to endeavour to comply with them in their *Actions*, or at least not to resist them, and harden and fortify themselves against them, by acting counter *to*, and flying in the Face of their own *Convictions*. For since the *Grace of God* doth not determine us to *Good*, but leaves us to our own Freedom, we can never expect to be determined to Good without our free *Concurrence*; which if we refuse we shall certainly perish in our *Sin*, and have not only the *Blood* of our own *Souls* to answer for, but all that *Grace* too which we have baffled and defeated.

VI. To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is necessary that we should believe that God takes particular Cognizance of the *good* and *ill* Use we make of our *natural Freedom*; that he doth not merely gaze upon our Actions as an indifferent and unconcerned Spectator, but beholds them with the highest Concern and Regard, with infinite Complacency or Detestation, and treasures them up
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in his all-comprehending Mind, to be produced *for or against* us in the Day of fearful *Reckonings* and *Accounts*; that he doth not *inspect* our Actions with a passant and cursory View, as Things of little or no Moment, but lays them up in *everlasting* Remembrance, so that every *good* or *evil* Thing we do, stands upon *Record* in the *Mind* of God in order to our final *Acquittal* or *Condemnation*. For so the Scripture tells us, not only that *God's eyes are upon the ways of man, and that he seeth all his goings*, Job xxxiv. 21. and that *his eyes run to and fro throughout the earth, and are in every place beholding the good and evil*, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. and Prov. xv. 3. but that he *sees* good Actions though done in *secret*, and will reward them openly, Matt. vi. 6. and that *he will bring every work into Judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil*, Eccles. xii. 24.

The Belief of which is absolutely necessary to *found* the *Obligations* of Religion. For if we suppose either that God *sees* not our Actions, or looks upon them with an indifferent Eye, without taking any *Notice* or *Cognizance* of them, there is no *religious Consideration* to oblige us. For upon this Supposal our Actions must all be indifferent to him; and if they are indifferent to him, what Reason have *we* to make any *Difference* between them? It is true, *good* Actions are in themselves beneficial, and *evil* ones prejudicial to us, and therefore for our own Interest-sake we ought to chuse the one and refuse the other; but this abstracted from all *Respects* to *God*, is only a *prudential* and not a *religious Observation*; but why should we do any *good* or avoid any *evil* upon God's Account, if *good* and

and *evil* are alike to him? But if we firmly believe that God not only *sees* whatsoever we *do*, but takes particular Notice of all our *good* and *evil* Actions, and out of an *high* Complacency in the *one*, and Abhorrence of the *other*, treasures up *both* in *everlasting* Remembrance, we cannot but discern ourselves *obliged* by all the *Reason* in the *World* to *chuse* what is *good*, and *eschew* what is *evil*. For what an infinite Encouragement is it to do *good*, to consider that while we are doing it, God's *Eye* is upon us, *regarding* us with high *Applause* and *Approbation*, and *entring* it with all its acceptable Circumstances into the eternal *Record* of his own Mind, from whence it shall be *produced* in the last *Day*, and *proclaimed* before *Men* and *Angels* to our everlasting *Honour* and *Glory*? So that when our *Memory* is lost upon Earth, and all that we did is swallowed up in the deep Abyss of *Oblivion*, our *Pieties* and *Virtues* shall be *famed* in the *Records* of *Heaven*, and have *everlasting* *Memorials* in the Mind of God. As on the contrary, what an infinite *Discouragement* is it from *sinning*, to consider that the *Eye* of that God, to whom *Vengeance* belongs, is intent upon us, following us thro' all our *Retreats* and *Concealments*, and *recording* every *ill* Deed, and all its *foul* Aggravations, in the eternal *Volumes* of his own *Remembrance*, which he will *one Day* most certainly *open* and *read* out before all the *World*, to our everlasting *Shame* and *Confusion*? So that when the *Pleasure* of our Sin is gone, and all that rendered it *tempting* or *desirable*, forever *vanished* and *forgotten*, the *Shame* and *Infamy* of it shall stand upon *Record*, and be transmitted down to *eternal* Ages.

VII. And lastly, To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is also *necessary* we should believe that God will *reward* and *punish* us according to our *doings*; that he is neither an *idle* nor an *impotent* Spectator of our Actions, that merely *pleases* and *vexes* himself with the Contemplation of them; but that all the Notice he takes of them is in order to his *rewarding* and *punishing* them, which he will one Day most certainly do, to our everlasting *Joy* or *Confusion*. But because this Argument will be the Subject of the ensuing Chapter, I shall insist no farther on it.

S E C T. II.

Of the Proofs and Evidences which there are to create in us a Belief of the Divine Providence.

HAVING in the foregoing Section given an Account of those *Parts* and *Branches* of the *Divine Providence*, which are *necessary* to be *believed*, in order to the *founding* the *Obligation* of *Religion*; I shall proceed in the next Place, to shew what *Evidences* there are to create this *Belief* in us; and because this is the great *Fundamental* of all *Religion*, upon the *Belief* of which it all *immediately* depends, I shall endeavour to *demonstrate* the *Truth* of it.

I. *A priori*, by Arguments drawn from God himself.

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II. *A posteriori*, by Arguments drawn from *sensible Effects* of God in the World.

I. I shall endeavour to assert the *Truth* of a *divine Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God himself*. For supposing that there is a *God*, that is to say, an infinitely *wise*, and *good*, and *powerful* Cause of all Things, (which I doubt not to make appear when I come to discourse of the *sensible Effects* of God in the World) it will from thence necessarily follow, that he *upholds*, *disposes*, and *governs* all Things by an over-ruling *Providence*: For,

I. If there be such a *God*, he must necessarily *be* and *exist* of *himself*, without any *Dependence* upon any *superior Cause*.

II. He must necessarily be the *Cause* of all *other* Things that *are* and do *exist*.

III. He must necessarily be *present* with all Things.

IV. Wherever he is, so *active* are his *Perfections*, that he cannot but *operate* wheresoever he finds *Objects* to work upon. From all which I shall make appear it will necessarily follow, that he continually *exercises* an over-ruling *Providence* over the World.

I. If there be a *God*, he must necessarily *exist* or *be* of *himself* without *Dependence* on any *superior Cause*. For when we speak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is *as perfect* as it is *possible*, that hath nothing *before* him, nothing *superior* to him, nothing *greater* than himself; which cannot be meant of any *derived* Being; because all
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Effects are *after* their Causes, and in some respect *inferior* to them, as *deriving* their Beings, and all their Excellencies and Perfections *from* them. But to say of God, that he is *after* or any way *inferior* to any Cause, is a palpable *Contradiction* to the very *Notion* of him ; it is to say that there is something *before* the *eternal* Something, *superior* to this *supreme* Something, more *perfect* than *infinite* Perfection. So that either there *can* be no *such* Being as a *God* in the World, or he must be *of himself* or *from his own* Essence, in which there must be such an infinite *Fulness* of *Being*, as that from all *Eternity past*, to all *Eternity to come*, it is *infinitely* removed from *not Being*, and so by *Necessity* of Nature must *from ever have been*, and *for ever be*. And *such* a Being we must admit of whether we will admit of a *God* or *no* ; for either we must allow that *this World*, or at least the *Matter* of it exists *of itself* by its own *never-failing* Fulness of Being, without ever needing any *Cause* to *produce* it, (which as I shall shew you by and by is *impossible*) or that all Things in it *derive* their Being from some *first Cause*, who having *no* Cause in being *before* him must necessarily be *uncaused* and *unproduced* ; and if God exists *of himself*, as he *must* do supposing he *is*, he must be *superior* to all Things ; for that which is *of itself* cannot but *be*, and that which cannot but *be* can have no Power above it, because if it *both*, that Power might have either *hindered* or *extinguished* its Being, and so it might *not* have been.

So that God's *Self-existence* necessarily supposes him exalted *above* all Power and Superiority, and

consequently to be the *supreme* and *sovereign* Power over all Things; but to suppose him to be *supreme* and *sovereign* without exercising *Rule* and *Dominion*, is *ridiculous*; for without the Exercise of *Dominion*, *supreme* Power is but a *useless* and *insignificant* Cypher-flourish with a glorious Name, *Rule* and *Dominion* being the only proper Sphere for *supreme* Power as such, to *move* and *act* in. So that unless God *rules* and *governs*, he is *supreme* to *no Purpose*, and his *sovereign* Power is *useless* and *in vain*, for if he exert his *sovereign* Power *at all*, it must be in *Rule* and *Dominion*, which is its only natural *Province*; but if he doth *not*, his *Sovereignty* is only a *majestick Sloth* that sits *sleeping* in an *awful* Throne with its *Hands* in its *Bosom*, without ever doing any Thing that is *Sovereign*; and of what Use is that *sovereign* Power that never exercises any *Act* of *Sovereignty*? Since therefore God's *Self-existence* necessarily *supposes* his *sovereign* Power over all Things, we must either grant that he continually *exercises* this power in ruling and governing the World, or assert that it is utterly *useless* and *in vain*, which, as I shall shew by and by, is as *absurd* as it is *blasphemous*.

II. If there be a God he must necessarily be the *Cause* of all *other* Things that *are* and do *exist*. For whatsoever might *not* have been, or may *not* be, must be derived from something which cannot *but be*. If it might not have been, how came it to *be*? Not from *itself* to be sure, for then it must *always* have necessarily *been*; and therefore it must finally be resolved into some *other* Cause which is of *itself*, and so cannot but *always have been* and
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always *be*. Now that this World is not of *itself*, but from some *other* Cause that is of *itself*, is evident; because whatsoever is of *itself*, must necessarily have all the *Being*, and all the *Perfection* of Being that is *possible*. For that which is of *itself* is *necessarily* of itself, and it is not only true *that it cannot but be*, but also *that it cannot but be of itself*; for if it might not have been of *itself*, it might not have been *at all*, because *itself* or its *own Essence* is the only *Ground* or *Reason* of its Being; and therefore if that *Reason* might have *failed* it might *never* have been *at all*. Now that which *necessarily* is of *itself*, hath neither *actual* nor *possible* Cause of Being; for if it hath an *actual* Cause, it is not of *itself*; if any *possible* one, it is not *necessarily* of itself; and if it hath no *possible* Cause of Being, it is *all* that it is *possible to be*, that is, it is so *compleat* and *perfect*, that no *possible Being* or *Perfection* of Being can be *added* to it.

Besides, that which is of *itself* includes *Necessity* of Being in its *Essence*, and that which includes *Necessity* of Being, must always *actually* be what it *is*, and have nothing *potential* in its Nature; and that which hath nothing *potential* must have all *possible* Being and *Perfection*. For if there be any *possible* *Perfection* of Being which it *hath* not, it must be in *possibility* of being what it *is* not, and if so, it is not *necessarily* what it *is*. So that if the World be of *itself*, it must include in the Nature of it a *Necessity* of Being; and if so, it must always *actually* be, that is, be always out of all *Possibility* either of *not being* or of being *what it is not*; and if it be out of all *Possibility* of
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not Being, it must have all possible *Being* ; if out of all Possibility of being what it is not, it must have all possible *Perfection of Being*, that is, all possible *Power*, and *Knowledge*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, which do all as necessarily result from *Self-being* as any *essential Property* from any *Essence*. Since therefore this material World hath none of these *possible Perfections* of Being in it, it is impossible it should be of *itself*, and if it be not of itself, it must have a *Cause* of Being that is distinct *from* and *before* itself ; and what can the Cause be but *God* ; since that which *caused* the World must be *before* all Causes, and that which is before all Causes must be *uncaused* and of *itself* ; and that which is of itself must have *all possible Perfection*, and consequently be *God*.

Since therefore the World was *made* by God, it will from hence necessarily follow that it is *ruled* and *governed* by him. For if he made the World, to be sure he made it for *some End*, it being unconceivable that infinite *Wisdom* should frame a World that is capable of the most *noble* and *excellent* Ends, without *designing* it to any End at all ; and if he designed it for any End, to be sure he is *concerned* that *that* End whatever it be should be *accomplished* ; and if he be, his own Concernment will lead him to the *Exercise* of a *Providence*, which is nothing else but a *constant* and *steady* Guidance of those Beings which he hath made, to those *common* and *particular* Ends for which he made them. For if he made them for *any* End, to be sure *whatever* it was, he did not let it *drop* out of his *Mind* and *Thoughts* as soon as he had made them, but still carries it a-
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long in his Eye and Intention ; and if he still intends that End, there is no doubt but he still prosecutes it, which he cannot do without a Providence ; for how can he drive Things on to the Ends for which he made them, if he be withdrawn from the World, and hath wholly sequestered himself from all the Affairs of it ?

III. If there be a *God*, he must necessarily be present with all Things ; because being of himself without any Cause, he must be without any Bounds or Limits of Being. For it is altogether unconceivable how any Thing that is of itself should be restrained or limited by itself. For tho' we must allow something to be of *itself*, whether we will admit of a *God*, or *no*, yet we cannot suppose that which is of *itself* to be the *Cause* of itself, without a Contradiction ; because every *Cause* must be before its *Effect* ; and therefore to suppose that which is of itself, to be the *Cause* of itself, is to suppose it to be before itself, that is, to *be* when it is *not*, or to *be* and *not* be together, which is impossible. When therefore we say that something is of *itself*, our Meaning can be no other than this, that it hath such an immense Plenitude of Being in itself, as that it neither needed nor required any Cause to produce it ; and how can that which is of itself without being the Cause of itself be any way restrained or limited by itself ? For that which limits Beings, is only the *Will* or *Power* of their *Causes*, which either would not or could not bestow any further *Being* or *Perfection* upon them ; and therefore only such Things as are caused are limited, because they being produced out of *nothing*, are only so far and no far-

ther brought into being, as their Cause was willing or able to bring them. That therefore which exists of *itself* without any Cause of Being, must exist of itself without any Limits of Being, because it was neither limited by *itself* nor by any other Cause; and that which hath nothing to limit it, must necessarily be immense and boundless. God therefore being this *Self-existing Being*, must necessarily be of an *unlimited Essence*; an Essence which no possible Space can either circumscribe or define, but must necessarily be diffused all through, circumfused all about, and present with all Things.

And if he be present with all Things, how is it imaginable he should sit still among them, and exercise no *Providence* over them? For since he is a *living Being*, he must be vitally present wheresoever he is, and that he should be vitally and yet unactively present among a *World of Beings*, that he should live in this wide *Univerſity* of Things, and in every Part of it, and yet take no more Notice of, have no more Influence upon it than if he were a dead and senseless Idol, is altogether inconceivable; and we may as well imagine a Sun in the Universe without *Heat* or *Light*, as a living God surrounding and penetrating all Things without ever exerting his *active Powers*, or shedding forth his *vital Influence* upon them. For wherever Life is, it will operate; and therefore since God, who is all Life and Activity, is every where, he must operate every where, and if he operate every where, that *Operation* is an *Universal Providence*.

IV. And lastly, If there be a God, he must be endowed with all those active Perfections of *Power*
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and *Wisdom*, *Justice* and *Goodness*; all which must be present wheresoever he is. For as for *Power*, it is nothing else but the *Spring* or *Fountain* of *Causality*, and therefore since God is the first Cause, he must necessarily be the *Spring* of the *Power* of all *Causes*, and that from which all *Power* is derived must itself be *all powerful*; otherwise it will derive more *Power* than it hath, and be the *Cause* of that whereof it hath no *Causality*, which is a Contradiction. And then as for *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, they are inseparable to perfect *Power*; which how forcible soever it be, cannot be perfect except it be conducted by *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; for without these, *Power* is only an *irresistible Whirlwind*, that sweeps and hurries all Things before it without any *End*, or *Method*, or *Order*. And what a lame, blind, and defective *Power* must that be, that can neither design nor contrive, neither propose to itself beneficial Ends, nor yet chuse suitable Means to effect them? and in a Word, that can neither intend well nor prosecute wisely? If therefore the *Power* of God be perfect, as it cannot but be, being the Original of *all Power*, it must necessarily be conjoined with perfect *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; with perfect *Goodness* to level its Intentions at good and beneficial Ends; with perfect *Wisdom* to order and direct its Prosecutions.

Since therefore perfect *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, are essential to God, they must be co-extended with his *Essence*, which as I shewed before is extended to *all Things*. And how can we conceive such active Perfections as these to be present with all Things without ever acting upon them?

them? For the very *End* and *Perfection* of all these Attributes consists in their *Exercise*; for so the End of *Power* is *Action*, the End of *Wisdom* is *ordering* and *contriving*, and the End of *Goodness* is *doing good*. How then can we suppose that an infinite *Power*, whose End is *Action*, should be present where a World of Things are to be done, and do nothing? that infinite *Wisdom* whose End is *ordering* and *contriving*, should be present where a World of Things are to be ordered, and order nothing? Or that infinite *Goodness* whose End is *doing good*, should be present where a World of Good is to be done, and do none at all? What is this but to transform the Divine *Perfections* into senseless *Idols*, that have *Eyes*, but *see not*, *Hands*, but *act not*; that have boundless, but useless and unactive *Powers*; that have glorious *Names*, but in reality stand but for so many *Cyphers* in the World? And thus I have endeavoured to demonstrate a *Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God* himself; but because there may be something in them too subtle and metaphysical for common Apprehensions to reach, I have but briefly insisted on them. I proceed therefore in the second Place to another sort of Arguments, which are more easy and obvious, *viz.* such as are drawn from sensible *Effects*, of which I shall give these six Instances.

I. The constant *Direction* of Things to the same good *Ends*, which have no *Design* in themselves.

II. The watchful *Providence* of Things which have no *Forefight* in themselves.

III. The

III. The mutual *Agreement* and *Correspondency* of Things which have no *Understanding* of themselves, or of one another.

IV. The *Continuation* of Things in the same comely *Order*, which have no *Government* of themselves.

V. *Miraculous* Events.

VI. *Predictions* of future and remote *Contingencies*.

I. One sensible Instance of a *Divine Providence* is the constant *Direction* of Things to the same good *Ends* which have no *Design* in themselves. When we see Things void of all Sense and Reason as constantly directed to good Ends, as they could be if they *had* Sense and Reason, we may be sure that there is a Reason without them that framed them for those Ends, and directs them to them; it being unconceivable how *Chance* or blind *Necessity* that have no *Design*, or *Art*, or *Contrivance* in them, should constantly operate as regularly as *Reason* itself. Now if we survey this vast Universality of Things, we may easily observe, at least of the *Generality* of them, that they are framed for and directed to some wise and excellent *End*; and though through our own *Short-sightedness*, or want of *Enquiry*, we do not see the *Use* and *Tendency* of them *all*, yet this is no Argument at all that they are vain and superfluous. For as we now see the Use of a World of Things which *past* Generations understand not, so there is no doubt but *future* Generations will understand the Use of a World more than *we*; and therefore since the *Usefulness* of the Generality of Things

Things is now so apparent and visible, we ought in all Reason to conclude, that *our* not discerning the Usefulness of them all, proceeds not from *their* Defect, and from *our own* Ignorance.

Let us therefore briefly survey this beautiful Scene of Things that is before us. The *Sun* and *Earth*, for Instance, are Things that are utterly void of *Understanding*, and therefore can have no *Design* or *Contrivance* in them; how then came they to place and continue themselves at such a commodious Distance from one another; whereas in such a vast and immense Space they might have found ten thousand Millions of other Places and Distances to *fix* in? The *Earth* might have found room enough to place itself either much nearer to, or much remoter from the *Sun* than it is; but if it had done so, it must have been either everlastingly parched or everlastingly frozen and benighted, and either way converted into an useless, barren and uninhabitable Desert; whereas where it now is, it stands at the most convenient Distance from the *Sun*, to be warmed and cherished by his enlivening Fires, and neither to be roasted by being too *near* them, nor frozen by being too *far* from them; but to receive from them such a temperate Heat as is sufficient to excite its seminal Virtues, and to draw up its *Juices* into them, and thereby to ripen its natural Fruits, and in a Word, to comfort and refresh its Inhabitants, and to render it to them a pleasant, a healthful, and a fruitful Paradise. Since therefore of ten thousand Millions of Places wherein it might have fixed to that *Immensity* of *Space* that surrounds it, it hath fixed upon, and doth still continue in the *best*, without any *Design*

sign or *Wisdom* of its own, it is plain that there is an over-ruling *Wisdom* without it that chose its Place, and fixes and determinates it thereunto. Again, How came the *Sun*, (for whether it be the *Earth* that moves about the *Sun*, or the *Sun* about the *Earth* is all one to our Enquiry) how came this *Sun*, I say, which hath no *Reason* to govern itself by, to be determined to such a useful Course of Motion? What makes this vast and mighty *Body* move round the *Earth* in twenty-four Hours, in finishing which spacious Circle of Motion it must fly far swifter than a Bullet from a Cannon's Mouth; and yet through so many Ages each twenty-four Hours it hath constantly performed it, without being so much as one Minute *faster* or *slower*; whereby it makes those just and regular Returns of *Day* and *Night* to both the *Hemispheres*, so that neither the one nor the other is either too much heated by his Presence, or too long benighted by his Absence, because as soon as the one hath been sufficiently *warmed* and *cherished* with his Rays, he immediately retires from it into the other, and by so doing he gives the *active* Animals leave to rest, the *over-heated* Air to cool, and the *gasping* *Earth* to repair its fainting Virtues, which a continued Heat would soon exhaust and extinguish. Thus by returning *Day* and *Night* to both Parts of the *Earth* once in twenty-four Hours, he preserves both their *Heat* and *Moisture* upon which all *Generations* depend, in a due and regular Temper, so that neither their radical *Moisture* is consumed by the parching Droughts of the *Day*, nor their *vital* Heat extinguished by the cool Moistures of the *Night*, but the one still allays and tempers the other by their quick

and alternate Revolutions. How then can the Sun that understands no Utility, and designs no End, to be determined to this Course or Motion, which above all others is so admirably useful and advantageous to this World we live in? Again, What is the Reason that since he thus *equally* moves round the Earth, he doth not *always* move in the same Circle, but run out every Day into a different Circle almost a whole Degree farther *Northward* or *Southward*, and this so constantly and so precisely, that in six thousand succeeding Revolutions he hath never varied so much as *one* Minute from his Course either *one* way or the *other*, and by these his stated *Excurrences* towards the *North* and *South* he makes the *Seasons* of the Year, gives a *Summer* and a *Winter*, a *Spring* and a *Fall* to all Parts of the Earth, without which the Earth would long ere this have been utterly useless, and all its *Fruits*, and for want of them its *Animals* too would have for ever perished? For some Parts of it would have been scorched with everlasting *Heat*, others bound up with everlasting *Frost*; here it would have been all a *Sandy*, there all an *Icy* Desert, and so both *Vegetation* and *Generation* would every where have utterly ceased, either for want of *Moisture* or for want of *Heat*. How came the Sun then, which hath neither *Sense* nor *Reason* of his own to guide him, to be directed into such a commodious Course of annual Motion, when as in that vast Space he moves in, he might as well have run ten thousand *other* Courses of Motion? He might have moved all the Year round the Earth's *Equator*; but if he had done so, all the middle Tracts of Earth both *Northward* and *Southward* would soon have been scorched

scorched up with his continual *Presence*, and all the remoter Parts both ways would quickly have died with *Cold* through his perpetual *Absence*: or he might have run his annual Course on one Side only of the Earth's *Equator*, and made his circular Excursions to or beyond the *Pole*; but if he had done so, he must have left a great Part of the opposite Hemisphere exposed to everlasting *Night* and *Cold*; whereas in the annual Course of Motion he now performs, he sheds forth his *Light*, and *Heat* and *Influence* over all the World, and by turns gives every Part its *yearly* Seasons, which is a plain Evidence that all his Motions are conducted by a wise and over-ruling Mind, which among so many Courses of Motion that lie before him in the boundless Space he moves in, hath determined him to that which for Perpetuity is much the best and most commodious.

And the same is to be said of the Motions of the *Moon*, which Nature hath designed for a vicarious Light to the Sun, to supply his Absence and perform his Office in this lower World. For what makes this senseless and irrational Planet, that moves without any *Intention* of its own, wander by turns *Northward* and *Southward* some Degrees beyond the Sun? and what makes it move *Northward* when the Sun is *Southward*, and again *Southward* when the Sun is *Northward*; whereas in that immense Space wherein it swims, it hath room enough to run a thousand other Courses of Motion, none of which could have been so advantageous to us as this? For by moving *Northward* when the Sun is *Southward*, and so *è contra*, it moderates the Cold and Darkness of the Winter Nights, and
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by passing beyond the *Tropicks*, which are the Boundaries of the Sun, it in some Measure supplies his *Absence*, by enlightening those long and tedious Nights in which the Regions towards the *Poles* are buried; which is a plain Instance of the singular *Care* of *Providence*, that no Parts of the Earth should be left altogether destitute of the necessary Comforts of the Heavenly *Light* and *Warmth*.

Again, How came the *Air* which hath no *Design* in itself, to place itself so commodiously as it hath done between the *Earth* and the *Heavens*? Why is there not a wide *Vacuity* between? Or if some *Body* must needs intervene, why was it not *Fire* or *Water* as well as *Air*, which of all other Bodies is the most commodious? For had it been a void *Space*, there could have been no *Inter-course* between *Heaven* and *Earth*; or had it been filled with *Fire* or *Water*, it would have *consumed* or *drowned* the Earth, and all Things belonging to it; but as for the *Air*, which is a thin, swift, fluid and transparent *Body*, it is of all others the most proper *Vehicle* of the Celestial Influences. For what other *Body* is there, that through such a stupendous Distance could have conveyed down to us the *Light* and *Heat* of the Sun, with such an ineffable Swiftneſs; or what other *Element* could have been so proper for Animals to move and breathe in? Since therefore this Space between the Earth and Heavens might have been supplied with other *Bodies*, but with none so fit as *Air*, which yet is no way conscious of its own Fitness, and so cannot be supposed to choose this Space for itself, it is a plain *Evidence* that there was a
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wise Mind *without* it that *chose* this Habitation for it.

And now we are come down to this terrestrial Globe, which consists of *Earth* and *Water*, let us briefly consider the admirable use of both, and of all Things appertaining to them. How came the senseless Water to bore *Holes* and *Channels* in the Banks of the Ocean through long *Traëts* of Earth, and against its own Nature to climb up to the Tops of Mountains, that so it may be able not only to run down again with Ease, but also to carry itself to such *Heights* afterwards, as the Necessities of *Men* and *Beasts* require, and to unite into large *Rivers*, that run into all the inland Parts of the Earth, watering both them and their thirsty Animals all along as they go, till at last they return into the Ocean again? How comes this dull and senseless Element, that can consult neither its own Conscience nor that of other Beings, to be *salt*, where it is convenient for *itself* to be *salt*, viz. in the *Ocean*, by which it is preserved from *Putrefaction*; and *fresh* where it is convenient for other Beings that it should be *fresh*, viz. in the *Fountains* and *Rivers*, that so it may be fit to fructify the *Earth*, and to be a wholesome Drink for its *Animals*? How came so many *Rivers* and *Fountains* which do all arise from the *salt* Waters of the *Sea*, to be *stripped* of their *salt* Particles, by running through the Pores of the Earth, and thereby to be rendered both fruitful to the *Ground* and wholesome for *Men* and *Beasts*? How comes it to pass that so many *Clouds* as are drawn up out of the *salt* Ocean, should in their *Ascent* so far shake off their *Salt* as to descend back again upon the Earth

Earth in sweet and fresh Showers? and how come those *Vapours* of which the *Clouds* consist, and which are much thicker and heavier than the Air, to be drawn aloft as they are by the Rays of the Sun, which have neither Pumps nor Buckets to exhale them? And when they are aloft in the Air, how come they to gather into thick Clouds, and not rather to disperse themselves about in that vast *Expansum*, or to return back again to the Earth in thin Vapours as they arose? and while they hang in the Air, what is it that sustains their Weight, and when they fall, how comes it to pass that they ordinarily fall in soft and gentle Showers that water the Roots of the Grass and Corn, without any prejudice to their Stalks and Blades, and not rather in *Mists* or Streams, which either would be insufficient to moisten the Earth, or lay waste its Corn and Fruit, with the Violence of their Fall? all which are illustrious Instances of a *wise* and *powerful* Providence, that directs and orders this senseless Element, and causes it ordinarily to move and act as if it had Wisdom in itself, and did therewithal industriously consult the publick good of this World; but this Argument you may find handled more at large in a late excellent Treatise *de Deo*.

And now we are arrived to the *Earth* whereon we live and move and have our Beings, which though itself be of a broken and irregular Figure, and seems to be rather the mighty Ruins of some more beautiful Structure, than an *original Effect* of the divine Art and Contrivance, yet contains in it the most amazing Instances of an *all-wise* and *all-powerful* Providence. For how comes this dull
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and stupid Lump to be impregnated with such an infinite Variety of *seminal Virtues*, all which do proceed as orderly and artificially in the Formation of their Plants and Fruits, as if they were every one endued with a most wise and intelligent Mind? For since the Plants do all derive their Nourishment from the inward Parts of the Earth, it is necessary that some Parts of them should be buried under Ground, that so they may come at their Food; and that these Parts would be fitted with spongy strings to fasten them to the Earth, and to suck in those Juices of it whereon they feed; and accordingly the *seminal Virtue* of every Plant first forms itself a Root under Ground, which runs out more or less from the Centre of it into greater or smaller Strings proportionable to the Magnitude of the Plant it bears, that so how great soever it be, it may by these Strings be so fastened to the Earth, as that the Wind to which its upper Parts are exposed, may not be able to tear them up; then this *seminal Form*, whatsoever it be, digests these Strings into a porous and spongy Substance fit to suck in the Juices of the Earth on every side, and bores little Holes or strait Fibres through them from one end to the other, that so by these Conduit-pipes they may all convey the Juices they imbibed into the Centre of the Root; and having thus formed its Root, and by these Strings or nervous Filaments supplied it with plenty of Juice, by strange mysterious Art it concocts the liquid Matter into a hard and solid Substance, through which it also bores an infinite number of strait Fibres from the very Centre of the Root, to convey up with it those Juices

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that are lodged there, with the thicker Parts of which it nourishes and increases its more solid Substance, thrusting forth the thinner towards the *Surface*, and the thinnest at the *Extremities* of its *Branches*; the former of which it digests into a *Bark*, wherewithal it cloaths the tender Body of its Plant, to defend it against the Violences of *Heat* and *Cold*; the latter into *Leaves*, and therewithall adorns its Branches, and shelters its Fruit from the Scorching of the Sun, and the excessive *Moisture* of the Rain; and by thus distributing the still-rising Juices, it still encreases its Plant till such time as it arrives to its full Growth and Maturity; so that from the utmost *Strings* of the *Root*, to the *Centre* of it, from the *Centre* of the *Root* to the highest *Branches* of it, from the *Branches* to the *Leaves* and *Fruit* of it, these porous *Fibres* run on, by which every Part, how distant soever from the *Root*, sucks up its Juices and digests them into its own Substance; for even the *Leaves* and *Fruit* are hung upon the *Branches* by little, soft and spongy *Stalks*, through which there run innumerable *Fibres* that convey the *Juice* from the *Branches*, and by stupendous Art distribute it by their Pores through all the whole Body of the *Leaves* and *Fruit*. But then by

Vide *Lessius*
de Prov.

what particular Art the seminal *Vir-*
tues of each particular kind doth so
constantly and regularly concoct and
elaborate the Juices of the Earth into their own
specifick Smells and Tastes, and Figure and
Colours, is a Mystery that confounds and puzzles
all our Philosophy. Now whence I beseech
you proceeds this curious, inimitable *Art* which

we with all our Reason can neither transcribe nor comprehend? Not from the things themselves sure: For how can they have *Art* that have no *Reason*? And therefore of Necessity it must proceed from some all-wise, superintending Mind, that either immediately contrives and frames them, or else impresses their seminal Virtues with its own all-wise and powerful Art whereby they contrive and frame themselves.

And if in the Composure of every plant there are such visible Footsteps of a divine Art, how much more of every Animal, whose Parts for infinite Variety, delicate Smallness, exquisite Shape, Position and Temper, do as far excel the other, as the Offices for which they are designed? For tho' the plastick Soul that forms the Animal hath not the least Ray of *Art* or *Reason* of its own, yet in the Formation of it, it proceeds with as much curious and incomparable Art as if it were endowed with the most perfect Reason. For first it spins out the thicker Parts of the seminal Matter into little *Threads* or *Fibres*, part of which it hollows into *Pipes*, and part into *Spunges*, some whereof are more thin, and some more solid; all which with wondrous Arts it cuts and prunes in divers places, fitting their Ends to one another, and in divers Manners knitting them together into a well-proportioned Structure of *Bones* and *Members*; then of the thinner Parts of the seminal Matter it forms the Entrails, viz. the *Liver* and *Heart* and *Brains*, drawing out from each certain Fibres to be formed into *Veins*, and *Arteries* and *Nerves*, for which end it bores and hollows them through, extends and stretches them out at length, and divides
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them into innumerable Branches, which it spreads through all the Intrails, and thereby maintains a mutual Communication between them, and derives the Nourishment and Animal and Vital Spirits through all the Body ; and having thus spun the several Parts of the seminal Matter, and curiously woven them together, it concocts the remainder of the Matter which is still supplied with new Nourishment into the *Substance* of those several Parts, and this in such precise and regular Proportions, as to form every one of them, tho' infinitely various from one another, into its own proper Figure, and Measure, and Proportion ; so that within seven Days after the Conception, the whole Body is entirely framed, and distinguished into all its proper *Parts* and *Members* ; which, though they are so vastly great in their Number, so strangely different in their Size and Figure, so infinitely various in their Motions and Tendencies, do all contribute one way or other to the Beauty and Benefit of the whole ; some to propagate the Kind, others to preserve the Individual, others to distinguish what is necessary, convenient and pleasant from what is dangerous, offensive or destructive to its Nature ; some to pursue what is *good*, others to shun what is *evil* ; others to enjoy those *goods*, and others to defend it against those *evils* that threaten or invade it ; so that of all these infinitely numerous and diverse Parts, not one can be wanting or defective without some considerable Damage to the whole. How then is it conceivable that such infinite number of different Animals, which are all so perfect in their Kind, so amazingly curious in their Composition, as that we
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with all our Reason can discern nothing in them that is either superfluous or defective, nothing in their *Figure* that is irregular, nothing in their *Position* that is misplaced, nothing in their *Motion* that is exorbitant, should all of them be framed by their several *plastick Souls*, which are utterly blind and irrational, without the *Conduēt* and *Direction* of an *all-wise* and *all-powerful* Providence? Should you behold a confused Heap of Earth, and Stone, and Iron, and Timber, without any visible *Artificer* near it, fall a polishing its own Parts, fitting them to one another, and disposing them into Order according to the Rules of Architecture; and at length frame them all together into the Form of a most beautiful Palace, would you not conclude that some skilful Mind were invisibly present there, and did work upon this senseless Heap, and dispose its Parts into this comely Order? And yet in the Composition of any one *Animal* there is infinitely more Art than in the most beautiful *Structure* in the World. How then can we imagine that the blind, artless Matter, of which it is composed, could ever have framed itself into this admirable Form and Contexture, had not some great Mind been invisibly present at the Composition of it, or at least imprinted on its artless Matter, some powerful Signature of its own *wise* Art to *direct*, and Order to *contrive* it.

I might from hence have proceeded to the Formation of *Man*, the Master-piece of all this lower Creation, in whose *Frame* and *Structure* there are such Miracles of Art as do out-reach both the *Imitation* and *Wonder* of the most raised and comprehensive Minds. For who can sufficiently admire

the skilful Contexture of his Corporeal Parts, which, tho' almost infinite in Number and Variety, do not only compose a Body of a most amiable *Symmetry* and *Proportion*, but are also as exactly framed, and tempered and adapted to perform the Offices of Life, and Motion, and Sense, and Reason, as Art or Wit can fancy and imagine them? But then how much more admirable is the Soul which inhabits and animates this Body? for of whatsoever Substance this Thing we call our Soul is, it is evidently framed for great and noble Operations, to disclose the Mysteries of Nature and to dive into its deep Philosophy, to penetrate into the Causes of Things, and with its nimble and sagacious Thoughts to survey this ample Theatre of Beings; to recollect Things past, and to foretel Things to come; to invent the most useful Arts and comprehensive Sciences, to dictate good Laws, and project wise Policies for the Government of Human Societies; and in a Word, to understand the right Reasons of Things, and to *regulate* its Will and Affections by them; and is it possible we should imagine a Being thus exquisitely framed, to be the Product of a blind and artless Matter, to be nothing but a lucky Jumble of senseless and irrational Atoms? For suppose it were nothing but elaborated Matter, yet certainly it requires infinite Art and Skill to *contrive* and fashion it into all those curious Springs, and Wheels and Mechanick Knacks that are necessary to render it not only a living and feeling, but also a wise and rational Matter. For how is it conceivable that a little Drop of Water, without the Assistance of any *Mind* or *Providence*, should form itself not only into all
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the Parts and Lineaments of a Human *Body*, but also into a Human *Mind*, a Mind of *vast* Desires and infinite Capacities of Knowledge, that can form Ideas within itself of every thing that is round about it, and from them can frame innumerable Propositions, and deduce them into Arts and Sciences; and in a Word, that can move itself and the Body it lives in, by its own internal Springs, and form itself into so many various and contrary Affections, by the mysterious Force and Energy of its own Reason and Discourse? If you beheld a dead Pencil move without any visible Hand, and dip itself into various Colours, and draw but an exact Picture of a Man, you would doubtless conclude either that some invisible Limner had infused into it the Art of Limning, or did immediately manage and direct it. But should you find this Picture, when it is drawn and finished, not only *live* and *move*, but *reason* and *discourse*, and exert all sorts of *Animal* and *Human* Operations, could you imagine that ever the blind, irrational Pencil formed it of itself without being managed or directed by some superior Mind or Providence?

And thus I have given some brief Instances of the constant Direction of all sorts of Things, how stupid and irrational soever, to some *wise* and *good* End; which is a plain Evidence of an universal *Providence* over the World, that in a constant and uniform Series directs Things to their proper Ends, that have no Aim or Design of their own, and so are utterly incapable to guide and direct themselves.

II. Another sensible Evidence of a *Divine Providence* is, the *sagacious Providence* of Things that

have no *Forefight* in themselves. For among irrational Beings that can neither apprehend for what *Ends* they act, nor by what *Means* they may best effect them, how strange it is to consider with what *Insight* and *Providence* they many of them act in stirring up Provisions for themselves against a Time of Extremity, in framing their own Beds and Nests, and defending themselves and their Young against approaching Dangers; in educating their Young, and propagating their Kind through all succeeding Generations; insomuch that if they were every one endued with Reason of their own to *foresee* their own Dangers, and *forecast* their own Conveniency and Safety, they would not act with more *Skill* and *Sagacity* than they do. For thus the *Plants* that have neither *Sense* nor *Reason* to discern the Periods of their own Growth and Decay, when they have almost spent themselves, and are ready to *wither* and *die*, run up into Seed, as if they foresaw their own approaching Fate, and did thereupon bethink themselves of propagating their Kind before it be too late, and leaving a numerous Posterity behind them. And therefore since they have neither Thought nor Forecast in themselves, it is evident that there is a Providence that thinks and forecasts for them.

Thus also those Plants that shoot up on high, but are too *weak* to support themselves, such as the *Hop*, and *Vine*, and *Ivy*, run out into little *Strings* or *Tendrils* with which they lay hold upon some Body that is *stronger* than themselves, as if they were conscious of their own Weakness, and so to prop up themselves did designedly twist about those stronger Bodies, that are best able to support them.

them. And therefore since they neither know their own *Weakness*, nor yet the *Strength* of the *Trees* or *Wall* they depend on, it is evident that there is a wise Providence that knows both, and guides and directs them to their Safety.

And as there is a visible Providence over *Plants*, so there is also over *brute* and irrational Animals, and especially over the smallest and most contemptible, who by Reason of their natural *Weakness* and *Impotence* are less able to provide for themselves. For thus the Spider is a Creature as void of *Reason* as the Plant of *Sense*; and yet with what *wondrous* Art doth he spin his Web out of a viscid Matter within his own Bowels? He extends the Threads of it cross to one another, leaving equal Angles in the Middle, *fastening* the extreme to the opposite Threads, and then, lest through the Weakness of the slender Threads of which it is composed, the Fly he hunts should happen to break through, he weaves several *Under-nets* one within another, and with a wondrous Art *fastens* them all together, that so if *one* should fail, the *other* might hold; and when he hath thus fixed and spread his *subtile* and *strange* contrived Snare, he lies in wait in a little Den without, made by him on purpose to *conceal* himself; from whence, as soon as the Fly is *entangled*, he swiftly *runs* and *seizes* it, and having *killed* it, carries it away and lays it up in a safe Repository against a Time of Famine. In all which Performance this *irrational* Insect proceeds as *providently* and *wisely* as if in a long Deduction he had inferred one Thing from another, and acted upon the most *rational* Deliberation; and therefore since he

is void of reason *himself*, and doth not determine himself by any natural Logic of his own, he must proceed by the Reason and Direction of some wise Mind without him, that he hath the guidance and disposal of his Motion. For he begins not to exercise his Art after he is arrived to a riper Age, but is born with his Trade about him, and spins and weaves from his very Infancy; nor is there any diversity in his Manufacture, as there useth to be in those of rational Artificers, but it is always woven in the same Manner, and Figure, and Fashion, which is a plain evidence that he effects it not by any *Art* or *Reason* of *his own*, but by mere *natural Instinct*, which is nothing but the Impression of the Art and Reason of the Author of Nature, which Impression knows not what it doth, nor upon what Reason it proceeds, but only answers to the *Reason* of God as the Signature doth to the Seal that imprest it, and like an Echo, articulates and resounds his Voice without understanding what it means. And as the senseless Echo when it reverberates Words that carry Sense and Reason in them, supposes the original Voice to proceed from some intelligent Mind; so these irrational Instincts of Nature, which express so much *Art* and *Reason* in their Operations, do necessarily imply that there is some wise Mind or Providence to which they owe their Original and Continuance.

For thus to instance farther, with what a strange and wonderful Art do the *Bees* frame their *Combs*, which they divide on each side into a world of little six-cornered Cells, and then prop them up with middle Walls of Pillars which they raise from
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the Floor into an Arch, by which as they are rendered more *strong*, so the Bees have an entrance through to repair them whenever they decay; and having thus artificially built their Houses, with what industry they do wander to and fro to gather the sweet Dews of Heaven, whereon they live, from the Herbs and Flowers of the Field, and with what care do they treasure them up in those little Cells against Winter, when they can neither go *forth* by reason of the Cold to seek their Sustenance abroad, nor yet find it if they could; and when they have filled their Cells with their winter Provision, they providently draw over the mouth of them a thin Skin or Membrane to preserve the grateful Liquor lest it should drop out and be lost; and in a Word, in what a regular Order do they live, they rest and labour all together, and in the discharge of several Offices conspire to the same Work; some press the Flowers with their Feet, others with their Mouths or Down of their Bodies gather up the Moistures which these press out and carry them home to these Cells; some bring home the Materials of which their Cells are composed, others disburthen them of it, others build with it, and others plane and polish the Building. Thus all Hands are at work first to build the House they are to dwell in, and to divide it into its several Apartments, and then to store them all with Provision against the ensuing time of Scarcity. Now therefore (not to mention their wondrous Polity and Government of which so many curious Observations have been made) how is it possible they should do all these Things with so much Regularity and exact Order, without being guided by

some *Art* and *Reason*? But yet it is certain it is not by any Reason of their *own*; they do not at all consider when they build, how needful Houses are for themselves and their Winter Provisions, nor how convenient that waxy Matter which they gather is to build those Houses, nor what Necessity there is of dividing them into *distinct* Cells and Apartments; they understand not the Nature of those sweet Dews which they gather, whether they are *Food* or *Poison*, and when they gather more than they have present Need of they know not why they do it, they reason not with themselves that Winter is approaching, wherein neither these *Dews* will fall, upon which they live, nor themselves be able to go forth and gather them, and that therefore it behoves them to store themselves before-hand against the ensuing Famine; and when they have laid up their Store and are binding it in with the Membrane they draw over it, they do not consider that it is a fluid Matter that will be apt to *run out* and be lost; and yet all these Things they perform with as much Regularity and Art, as if they had thoroughly weighed and considered, and perfectly understood the Reasons of them; which is a plain Evidence that they are acted by a Reason that is not their *own*, and what other Reason can this be than that of the divine Mind which governs and disposeth all Things? And the same may be said of *Ants*, and *Moles*, and *Palmer-worms*, and innumerable other Animals, which tho' they have no Reason of their *own*, are yet in many Instances as evidently conducted by *Reason* as any *rational* Beings whatever.

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For with what admirable Art do the irrational Birds form their Nests a little after their *coupling*; they begin to build though they neither consider that they are *breeding*, nor yet do foresee when they shall *lay*; by which it is plain that there is a Providence which considers and foresees for them; and though they understand not what Materials are *fittest* to build their Nests, nor in what Order to frame and dispose them, yet there is a very wise Understanding that directs them both to choose and contrive the Materials, and this with greater Art than we with all our Reason can do. For as for the outward Surface of their Nests which comes not near their Bodies, they frame it with *Sticks* and *Thorns*, which with inimitable Art they *twist* and *interweave* into a *round* and *uniform* Hollowness, which they commonly daub round with Mud to render it more *compact* and *warm*; when this is done, tho' they understand not their own *specifick* Frame and Constitution, yet they proceed as if they did, and suit their Nests to the *strength* or *weakness* of their Natures; for those of them that are of a *hardier* Make, content themselves with an inward Plaistering, and when it is dried proceed to *lay* and *batch* their Eggs on it, without troubling themselves to *line* it with any *softer* Materials, as if they knew beforehand that the Constitution of their Young would be such as would not need any *Softness* or *Delicacy*; whereas those that are of a *tenderer* Frame take care to cloath the *hard* Plaistering with *Straw*, or *Hay*, or *Moss*, upon which those that are *tenderest* of all make another Layer of *Hair*, or *Down*, or *Feathers*, as if they perfectly *understood* what degree of *Softness* and *Warmth* would be necessary

cessary for the Preservation and Nourishment of their tender Offspring. Since therefore it is certain that they know none of all these Things, and yet they act as if they did, they must necessarily be supposed to act by the *Direction* of some wise Mind that perfectly knows them all. And then again, considering with what *Patience* and *Diligence* the Female sits upon her Eggs when she hath *laid* them, as if she understood the Philosophy of her own *Warmth*, how necessary it is to form and animate and hatch them, and with what *Care* and *Industry* the Male brings her in Provision whilst she is sitting, that so she may not be forced by the Necessities of Nature to neglect her Eggs, and leave them too long exposed to the cold Air, which in a short time would destroy the tender Principles of Life within them; and in a Word, with what *Care* and *Industry* they both conspire to cherish and feed their Young when they are *hatch'd*, till such time as they are *cloath'd* and *fledged*, and can fly abroad to seek Provision for themselves; considering, I say, how in all these Things they proceed as if they perfectly *understood* the *Reasons* and *Necessities* of their own Actions, it is plain that they must be guided either by a Reason in their own, or in some other Mind, that hath the *Command* and *Conduct* of their Motions. Now that it is not by a Reason of their own is evident, because whatsoever they do, they necessarily do, and cannot possibly do otherwise, for they never vary in their Operations, never try any new Experiments, but always proceed in the same Road and repeat the same Things in the same Method, which is a plain Sign that they cannot do otherwise, and consequently that they act

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not from *Reason* but *Necessity*; and therefore since they are made and impelled to act as they do, and yet do act so rationally and wisely, that which impels them must be a rational Mind, either acting upon them immediately, or by a fixed and permanent Impression of its *Art* and *Reason* on their Motions. For as *Aristotle* hath long since observed, ἔτε τέχνη ἔτε ζητήσονται ἔτε βελευσάμενα ποιεῖ, *they do these things neither by any art nor council nor deliberation of their own.* They are not Masters of the Wisdom by which they act, but are merely passive to the Impressions of that Wisdom that are made upon them. For so Men we see for their own Profit and others Pleasure can teach Dogs and other Animals to *dance* the *Measures* of *Tunes* and other *artificial* Motions, the *Rules* and *Ends* of which they understand not; for when they perform these Motions, they neither think of their Master's *Profit* nor the Spectator's *Pleasure*, which is the *End* and *Design* of them, nor understand the *Proportions* of *Musick*, which is the *Rule* of them, so that the Reason of their Motion is only in their Teacher's Mind, who by frequent use doth by Degrees imprint the Practice of his Art upon their *Fancies*: and if Man can so imprint his Art upon these artless Creatures, as to make them practise it without understanding either the *Grounds* or *Reasons* of it, how much more may an *all-wise*, and *Almighty* Mind? And therefore since *de facto* we behold a World of curious Art among brute Animals, that far exceeds all the little Feats we can teach them, why may we not as reasonably believe, that any one of these *dancing* Animals learned all his *artificial* Motions, the *Reasons* of which he understands not, without any

any *Arts Master* to teach them, as that *Ants* and *Bees* acquired all the *Art* and *Providence* they practise, without either discovering the Reasons of it by any Understanding of their own, or being ever instructed in it by any other provident Mind: for *Art* and *Providence* cannot be supposed without *Reason*, and therefore since the *Reason* of their Art is not in themselves, it must necessarily be in some Mind without them that hath the *Conduct* and *Direction* of all their Motions.

III. Another sensible *Evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the mutual *Agreement* and *Correspondency* of Things that have no Understanding in themselves, or of one another. For if we look abroad into the World, we cannot but observe an admirable *Harmony* among things which yet have no kind of *Knowledge* of one another, and therefore cannot be supposed to have framed and adapted themselves to one another, nor yet to be so framed and adapted, but by the Art and Contrivance of some very *wise* and *intelligent* Mind. For how can any cause fit any *two Things* to one another without having some Idea in his Mind of the Natures of them both? If therefore in the Nature of Things we can discover a World of mutual Suitabilities of *this* or *that*, and of one thing to another, it will be a sufficient Argument that they *all* proceed from some *wise* Cause that had an universal Idea of their Natures in his Mind, and saw how such a thing would suit such a thing, before ever he actually adapted them one to another.

Now not to insist any farther upon the admirable Fitness of the *Sun* and *Earth*, the *Water* and *Earth*, the *Air* and *Heaven* and *Earth* one to another,

other, which I have largely discoursed already, how exactly is every *Animal* fitted for its *Element*? and every *Element* for its *Animals*? Thus the *Birds* for Instance, are fitted with *Wings* to fly aloft in the *Air*, and the *Air* is fitted to bear them up, and to yield to the *Vibration* of their *Wings*: the *Fishes* are fitted to swim in the *Water*, having *Fins* which serve instead of *Oars* to cut through and divide the Streams, and the *Waters* are fitted for the *Fish* to swim in, being a *soft* and *fluid* Substance that is easily cut and divided; and as for the *Earth* and those *earthly* *Animals* that inhabit it, there is an admirable Congruity between them; for they being all framed to *walk* or *creep* must have an hard and solid Matter to move on, and the *Earth* being an hard and solid Matter requires such *Animals* as can *walk* or *creep* on it; and as every *Element* is fitted for the Motion of its *Animals*, and every *Animal* to move in its *Element*; so every *Element* hath a *Food* that is proper to the *Appetites* of its *Animals*, and every *Animal* an *Appetite* that is proper to the *Food* of its *Element*. So that as every *Animal* is fitted within with all those *Faculties* and *Organs* that are requisite to its procuring and enjoying what is good for it, and its shunning and repelling what is hurtful; so it is also furnished without with all that is necessary or convenient for its Support and Satisfaction. Thus every Faculty within hath an *Object* without prepared for it, that is exactly correspondent therewith, without which, as hath been excellently observed, the *Faculty* would become vain and useless, yea and sometimes harmful and destructive, as reciprocally the *Object* would import *little* or *nothing*,

thing, if such a Faculty were not provided for and suited to it. For thus the *Eye* would be perfectly useleſs if it were not for the *Light*, and the *Light* would be much leſs conſiderable if it were not for the *Eye*: for if all *Light* were extinguished, all thoſe curious Colours into which the *Light* is refracted would be utterly inſignificant; and if all thoſe *Colours* were extinguished, the *Eye* would be utterly deprived of one of its moſt pleaſant Entertainments. And what Uſe would there be of all their infinite variety of melodious Sounds, fragrant Odours, and delicious Savours which this Frame of Nature affords, were there no *hearing*, *ſmelling* or *tasting* Faculties? And what would theſe *Faculties* ſignify, were there no ſuch *Sounds*, or *Odours*, or *Savours*? So that theſe *Objects* and *Faculties* are all as perfectly fitted one to another as it was poſſible for *Art* to fit them; nothing could be better fitted for ſeeing than the *Eye*, nothing better framed to render Things viſible than the *Light*, and *Light* can be refracted into no Colour ſo grateful into the *Eye* as *green*, which is the great Colour of Nature; and the ſame may be ſaid of the *Ear* and *Sounds*, the *Smell* and *Odours*, the *Taſte* and *Savours*; and if the *Eye* were made to ſee, and the *Ear* to hear, as there is no doubt but they were, being ſo exquisitely framed for that Purpoſe; to be ſure *Light* was made for ſeeing, and *Sounds* for hearing, and ſo for all the reſt; and how is it poſſible that ſo many Things ſhould be made ſo exactly *harmonious* and *agreeable* with one another without the powerful *Art* and *Direction* of ſome very ſkilful Mind, and knew before-hand that this Thing would perfectly fit *that*, and conſequently had

had a perfect *Idea* of them both ? When therefore we behold such exact correspondencies between the *motive* Faculties of Animals and the *Elements* they move in, between the *Fruits* and *Products* of those Elements and the Faculties of *Taste*, *Digestion* and *Nutrition* in those Animals that inhabit them ; and in a Word, between all sensible Objects without, and sensitive Objects within, how is it possible we should be so senseless as not to trace out an *all-directing* Wisdom by Footsteps that are so express and remarkable ? For suppose you heard a musical Instrument move its own Strings into an exquisite Harmony, and run long Divisions of curious and well-proportioned Notes, without the Impulse of any visible Artist, would you not conclude either that some invisible Hand did immediately touch and play upon its Strings, or that they were moved by some internal Spring and Contrivance of a musical Mind ? How then can we attend to the admirable Harmonies of Nature, to the natural References and due Proportions and exact Correspondencies of all its innumerable Parts to one another, without believing that there is some great harmonical Mind which tuned it at first, and still plays upon it by the immediate *Touch* and *Impulse* of its own invisible Hand ?

And as all Things are thus fitted and adapted together, so are they also most regularly *subordinated* to one another according to their Rank and Worth ; the senseless Elements, with all their *Fruit* and *Product*, being subject to the Use of *Animals* to whom they afford a vast Variety of all Conveniencies and Necessaries answerable to their Desires and Needs ; so that of all those vast Numbers
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of sensitive Beings there is no one *kind* or *individual*, no not so much as a *Fly*, or *Worm*, or *Insect* but what is plentifully supplied out of these common Storehoules of Nature. And as the *Elements* are subjected to the Use of *Animals*, so both are subject to the Use of *Man*, who is as much superior to the brute *Animals*, as they are to the senseless *Elements*. To him therefore, as it is most fit and congruous, all Things here below pay Tribute; the Earth engenders within its Bowels Quarries of *Stone*, and *Mines* of *Coal* and *Metals*, to serve his necessary Uses and Conveniencies, and spreads its Surface with a vast Variety of *Herbs* and *Flowers* and fruitful *Trees* to supply him with *Food* and with *Physick*, and treat him with *Pleasure* and *Delight*; to entertain his *Eye* with beautiful *Colours*, his *Smell* with fragrant *Odours*, and his *Palate* with delicious *Savours*; the Waters serve to quench his *Thirst*, to dress his *Food*, to fructify his *Fields* and *Gardens*, to cleanse his *Body* and *Habitation*, and to maintain and facilitate his *Intercourse* and *Traffick* with all Parts of the World; the Air fans him with refreshing *Gales*, supplies him with *Breath* and with vital and animal *Spirits*; the Fire warms and cherisheth him, concocts his Meat and Drink into fit and wholesome Nourishment, and serves him in his most necessary Arts and manual Operations. And as all the four *Elements* do one way or other conspire to our Use and Benefit, so do all the *Animals* too that inhabit them, though as yet there are sundry of them whose Use we have not discovered, but as for the Generality of them there are innumerable Ways adapted to our Use; some to furnish our Table with *Food* and *Delicacies*, others to prevent or remove our Diseases with their
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medicinal Vertues; some to cloath, and some to adorn our Bodies, others to assist us in, and others to ease us of our Labours, and others to entertain us with chearful *Sports* and *Recreations*. Thus all Things here below have as plain a Reference to the Use of Man, who is the noblest Part of them, as if some *wise* and *powerful* Mind had contrived them on purpose to serve and benefit him; as on the contrary *Man* hath so plain a Reference to them, considering his *Needs* and his *sensitive* and *rational* Faculties, as if the same *wise* Mind had fram'd him on purpose to use and enjoy them.

And is it possible that after all this we should be so stupid as not to discern those bright Beams of *Wisdom* which shine through so many perspicuous Correspondencies: For it's certain that either they must be design'd by Wisdom, or happen by *Chance*; and is it possible that a blind *Chance*, which can do nothing regularly, and is the Parent only of monstrous and deform'd Births, should thus exquisitely fit and adapt Things to one another in such a long and orderly Series; that *Chance* which never yet compos'd a *Tune*, or wrote a *Line* of coherent Sense, should ever be the Author of this great Frame of Things, in which there is more of *Harmony* than in all the *musical* Composures, and more of *Sense* and *Philosophy* than in all the *studied* Volumes in the World? And if it cannot be the Effect of *Chance*, it must be the Product of *Wisdom* and *Providence*.

IV. Another *sensible Evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the *Continuation* of Things in the same comely Order which have no *Government* of themselves. That Things are put into a most useful,

wife and artificial Order hath been sufficiently demonstrated under the foregoing Particulars ; now I would fain know what was it that reduced them to, and still continues them in this Order ? did the blind Parts of the Matter whereof these Things are composed, once upon a time as they were wandering thro' the Field of infinite Space, beckon to one another, and by common *Consent* assemble themselves into a *General Council*, and there *advise* together how they should *rank* and *marshal* themselves into a World, and when upon grave and mature Advice they had agreed upon, and described and chalked out the Laws of their Motion, did they break up Council, and *set forth* in their several *Lines* to the Execution of their *Canons* and *Decrees*, till by their *oblique*, *parallel* and *Counter-motions*, they at last *interwove* themselves into all those beautiful *Contextures* we behold ? He who can imagine this to be either probable or possible, must himself be as *dull* and *stupid* as those senseless Parts of Matter are, of which he *dreams*. Well then, since these Things could not be effected by any Council or Contrivance in the Matter *itself*, was it by mere *Chance* that these blind Parts of Matter floating in an immense Space, did after several *Justlings* and *Rencounters*, jumble themselves into this beautiful Frame of Things ? Alas, this is a Conceit, if possible, more *ridiculous* than the former ; for how is it possible to imagine that *Chance* should ever make a *Man*, in the Contexture of whose Parts there are such *Wonders* of Art as do as far exceed the most curious Engines and Machines that ever human Art *invented*, as the most *glorious* and *magnificent* Palace doth a Castle of *Cards* ? And
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if Chance cannot so much as draw the *Piçture* of a Man, which is but a rude Imitation of his *Outside*, how much less can it shape, temper and connect all those hidden and subtile Springs of *Life* and *Motion*, *Sense* and *Imagination*, *Memory* and *Passion* within him? Well then, since it was neither from any *Wisdom* in the Matter of them, nor from any casual *Motion* of that Matter that this orderly Series of Things did proceed, was it from a *blind* Necessity? But pray what made this Necessity? How came the *Matter* of these Things that might have mov'd *otherwise*, having an infinite Space about it, and no Principle within it to incline it one way more than another, to determine itself to this Series of Motion? if you say it was by *Chance*, I have shew'd it is impossible; and if you say it was from *Eternity*, that is all one. For as an excellent Author of our own hath observ'd, Whether it were now, or Yesterday, or from Eternity, infers no Difference as to our Purpose; nor the *Circumstance* of the *Time*, but the *Quality* of the *Cause* being only here considerable; the same Cause being alike apt or unapt Yesterday as to Day, *always* as *sometimes*, from all *Eternity* as from any *set-time* to produce such effects. So that 'tis as possible for Matter fortuitously moved without any Art or Counsel to compose a World *now*, and to frame it into *Animals* and *Men* as it was from *Eternity*; that is, 'tis from *all Eternity*, and *now* equally impossible; and if it were by the Counsel of some intelligent Mind that it was fram'd into this World of Beings and orderly Series of Things, then it is doubtless by the same Mind that its Order and Harmony is still *continued* and *preserved*. For it is altogether

as impossible for Matter of itself unguided by Wisdom and Art to pursue any constant Course, as to fall into any regular Form, it being as we see all torn and broken into little Parts innumera- bly many, and infinitely diverse in their *Size*, and *Figures*, and *Motions*, and thence only fit in their several Courses to cross and confound each other. How then is it possible without vast Wisdom and answerable Power so to manage this wild and disordered Swarm of Atoms as to determine them to their proper *Bounds*, continue them in their regular *Ranks* and *Files*, and preserve them in the same *Tenure* of Action, so as that in all those new Productions of the *Individuals* of every *Kind* of *Plants* and *Animals* which are every Day compounded out of them, they should none of them ever *extravagate* in their *Motions* so as to *disturb* and *binder* one another, and finally *disorder* and *interrupt* the natural Course of Generation? When therefore we consider how this great *Machine* of the World (as the above-cited Author expresseth it) whose Parts are infinite for *Number* and *Variety*, hath stood six thousand Years together always one and the same, unimpair'd in its Beauty, unworn in its Parts, unwearied and undisturbed in its *Motions*; thro' what an infinite Series of Generations and Corruptions all its *Plants* and *Animals* have past, and yet how after they have been corrupted over and over, and their whole Frames have been broke in Pieces, and all their Parts divided and dispers'd, they have still been generated a-new, and rallied into the same *specifick* Natures, which, tho' they still consist of numberless Parts, are constantly drawn up into the same Postures and Figures

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and Positions, and with strange *Regularity* digested into the same handsome Order, as if they all *kept Time* with the *musical* Laws of some Almighty Mind, as the Stones of *Thebes* did with *Amphion's* Lute, and thereby continually danc'd into their natural *Figures*. When, I say, we consider these strange and wondrous Things, what tolerable Account can we give of the Performance of them without an over-ruling Providence? For how is it imaginable that in a six thousand Years Course of Generations and Corruptions these blind and *undesigning* Parts of Matter, which by reason of their infinite *Diversity* are so naturally apt to *thwart* and *disturb* one another, should maintain such regular Courses of Motion as still to concenter in the same Forms, so as that through all this vast Tract of Time not so much as one Kind of *Plants* or *Animals* should *miscarry*: How, I say, could this have been, had they not all along been conducted by a *steady unerring* Providence?

V. Another *sensitive Evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the *miraculous Events* that have happened in the World. By miraculous Events, I mean such as either for their *Matter* or *Manner* of Production do exceed the Power of *natural Causes*, or at least are produced by them out of their establish'd *Course* and *Order*. Such as *dividing the Sea, stopping the Sun, raising the Dead, curing the Sick, and Blind, and Lame*, with a *Touch* or *Word*; of all which we have notorious Instances both in the *Old* and *New Testament*; and these attested with as full and convincing Evidence as ever any Matters of Fact were that are recorded in History. For as for the Miracles of the *Old Testament*,

besides that they were sundry of them performed in the publick View of Nations, and were recorded in those very Ages wherein they were wrought, and so could have been easily disproved by ten thousand living Witnesses, had they not been *true*; besides that they were attested by the most ancient Heathen Poets and Historians in their *Mythologies* and *Histories*, who to be sure would never have yielded the Glory of such wondrous Effects to a Nation whom they *hated* and *despised*, had they not been forced to it by *undeniable* Evidence. In a Word, besides that they were *confirm'd* by the succeeding Prophets of that Nation, who both by the Miracles they wrought, and by the exact Accomplishment of their Predictions, have sufficiently *evidenced* themselves to be *supernaturally* inspired: Besides all which, I say, the Miracles of the *Old Testament* are abundantly attested by the *New*, the Credit whereof is *ratified* and *confirmed* by a World of *new* Miracles wrought by our Saviour himself, and particularly by his *Resurrection from the Dead*, which are not only in *part* confessed by the *Jews* themselves, his most *mortal* Enemies, and by the *Heathen* Writers who were implacable Persecutors of his Religion, but also by his own *Disciples* and *Apostles*, who, - as I shall shew hereafter, were *Eye-witnesses* of these Miracles, and did not only attest them with their *Mouths*, but also seal'd their Testimony with their Blood, and *confirm'd* it before all the World with infinite other Miracles which they wrought in his Name, and which they continued to work for several Ages together, as is evident not only from the wondrous Success of their *Ministry*, which
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without being attested with such miraculous Effects could never have propagated in so short a Time such a *bated* Religion over all the World, but also from the confident *Appeals* which the *Christian* Writers frequently make to their *Heathen* Enemies, in which they *Subpœna* them in as daily *Spectators* of their wondrous Works, and for the *Truth* of them challenge their own *Eyes* and *Ears*. So then that there have been such miraculous *Effects* can no more be doubted than that there have been such Men as *Pompey the Great*, or *Julius Cæsar*, the former being attested, all Things considered, with much more Evidence than the latter.

And if this Attestation be *true*, there must be a Providence; for how is it possible that blind Nature which neither deliberates nor chuses, should of itself ever *vary* or *interrupt* its Course without rushing into utter *Confusion* and *Disorder*? How should any Part of it, when 'tis once moved either *faster* or *slower* than ordinary, so restrain, or quicken its own Motion as to reduce itself back again to its establish'd Course? For if it once move *faster*, it must have some Degree of Motion superadded to it, and till that is withdrawn it must move *faster* for ever: If it move *slower*, it must have some Degree of Motion withdrawn from it, and 'till that be restored it must move *slower* for ever: How then is it possible that *Nature* or any Part of it which moves by a blind Necessity, should of its own Accord either *hasten* and then *slacken*, or *slacken* and then *hasten* the Course of its Motion, as it must do in the Production of *miraculous* Effects, without being influ-

enc'd by an *Almighty* Providence? We have feveral miraculous Instances of the diverting natural Causes from their Courfe, and ftopping them in it; fuch as caufing the Waters to divide and ftand ftill, and the Sun to move backward. Now how is it conceivable that any natural Cause that hath no *Will* of its own to move and determine it, fhould either ftop its own Motion and then move again, or divert from its Courfe and then return again if it were not under the Command of fome Will without it, that guides and difpofeth it according to its own Council? But befides thefe Scripture Miracles, there are fundry miraculous Instances of the rewarding Good Men and punifhing Bad, publickly recorded in the *Hiftories* of all Ages; fome of vindicating the Innocence, others of reftoring the Lives, others of relieving the Neceffities of good Men; fome of detecting the Crimes of bad Men, others of ftriking them Dead in their impious Facts, others of punifhing them in kind, and others of inflicting on them thofe very Plagues which they have imprecated on themfelves to give Credit to a Falfhood; of fome or other of which there is fcarce any Age in the World which hath not been furnifhed with fundry notorious Instances; fo that unlefs we will give the *Lye* to all human Testimony, and condemn the Records of all Ages for publick *Cheats* and *Impoftures*, we cannot deny but that there have been fundry Miracles in the World, and if of all thefe Miracles that have been fo ftrongly attested, there be but any one *true* and *real*, that one is a fufficient Argument of an *over-ruling* Providence. For if ever any thing hath been effected that is either *above* the
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the Power, or contrary to the established Course of natural Causes, it must be brought to pass by the Power of *God*; and if *God* doth sometimes visibly exert his own immediate Efficacy on this World, that is a plain Evidence that he always governs it; for whenever he thus exerts it, it is for some Reason to be sure, and for what other Reason should he thus strip his Arm and visibly exert his Power upon or before us, but either to awaken our *Attention*, or to confirm our *Faith*, or alarm our *Fear*, or encourage our *Hope*? And if ever he had any such Design upon us, it must be in order to his governing us; for to what other purpose can an *Almighty* being be supposed to Address himself to our Hope and Fear, and Faith and Attention, but to subdue and reduce us under his Rule and Government?

VI. And lastly, another *visible Evidence* of a divine Providence is *Predictions* of future and remote Contingencies. That there have been such things hath been universally acknowledged by *Heathens*, as well as *Jews* and *Christians*. As for the Heathen, *Tully* gives numerous Instances of it in his two Books of *Divination*; in the first of which he sets down this as the great Principle of Prediction: *Esse Deos, & eorum providentia mundum administrari, eosdemque consulere rebus humanis, nec solum universis, verum etiam singulis*, i. e. *That there are Gods, and that by their Providence the World is Governed, that they take Care of human Affairs, and this not only in general, but in particular*. And of these Predictions he tells us there was one *Chrysippus* who wrote a large Book, in which he gives innumerable Instances of them,
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all confirmed by very good Authority. Besides which there were their *Oracles*, and their *Sybilline Writings*, among which if there had not been a great many true Predictions, it is not to be imagined that ever the *wiser* and more *inquisitive* Part of Men should be so far imposed on as they were to pay such mighty *Respect* and *Veneration* to them, and that not only for a *little while*, but for several *Ages* together. But as for their *Oracles*, there are fundry of them recorded in antient Historians, together with their punctual Accomplishments; and *Tully* in particular tells us of one of *Apollo* his *Oracles*, which foretold a thousand Years before that *Syphselus* the Tyrant should reign at *Corinth*. And *Varro* makes mention of one *Vectius Valens* an Augur in the time of *Romulus*, who when *Rome* was a building, foretold by the flying of *twelve* Vultures, that the City should continue a thousand two hundred Years, which accordingly happened. But as for the *Reality* of Predictions we need seek no farther than the Holy Scriptures, in which you have fundry *Prophecies* of Things which happened a long time after, as particularly of the Deliverance of the *Jews* from those *two* Captivities, the one in *Egypt*, the other in *Babylon*; the former of which was foretold four hundred Years, and the latter above seventy Years before it came to pass, and yet Both of them accomplished punctually to a Day, as you may see in *Gen. xv. 13.* compared with *Exod. xii. 41.* and *Jer. xxv. 12.* compared with 2 *Chron. xxxvi. 21, 22.* which latter Prophecy is not only recorded in Scripture, but mentioned by *Eupolemus*, an Heathen Historian cited by *Eusebius*, *Præpar. pag. 454.* Thus also you have

Eſay his Prophecy of *Cyrus*, whoſe Name and Achievements he moſt exactly foretels long *before* he was born, *Eſai.* xlv. 1, &c. And then for *Daniel's* Prophecies of the grand Revolutions of the Empires of the World, they do ſo punctually deſcribe what happened long *after*, that *Porphyrus* himſelf, though a mortal Enemy to Chriſtianity, is forced to *confess* the exact Agreement of his *Prophecies* with the *ſucceeding* Events (*vid.* S. *Chryſoſt.* *cont. Jud.* Tom. 6. p. 326.) and hath no other way to evade the Force of them but by affirming without any Colour of *Reason* or *Authority* that they were written *afterwards* in or near the Time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, though it is evident that the LXX Interpreters who tranſlated the *Old Teſtament* a hundred Years before, tranſlated this Prophecy of *Daniel* with it. And *Joſephus* expreſſly tells us, that *Jaddus* the High Prieſt ſhewed this very Prophecy to *Alexander* the Great, who lived long before *Antiochus*, *Joſeph.* *Antiq.* l. 11. But to name no more, there are the Prophecies of the Meſſias, of the *Place*, and moſt *particular* Circumſtances of his *Nativity*, and *Ministry*, and *Life* and *Death*, and *Reſurrection*, and *Ascenſion*, all which were ſo punctually accompliſhed in our bleſſed Saviour, that did not the *Jews*, in whoſe Hands they have been always preſerved, *own* and *acknowledge* them, one would be apt to ſuſpect that they were *forged* on purpoſe by ſome Chriſtian to countenance our Saviour's Pretence of being the true Meſſias.

And if there be any ſuch thing as Prophecy, if but any *one* of all theſe Inſtances be *real*, (and that none of them ſhould, would be *very* ſtrange) this *one* will be a ſufficient Evidence of a Divine Pro-

Providence; for to foresee Things at a *Distance*, and before the Causes are in being, so as to describe before-hand the precise *Time*, *Place* and *Manner* of their Existence, or to foresee Things *casual* and *contingent*, that wholly depend upon the free Choice and Determination of *voluntary* Agents, requires a Mind of *infinite* Comprehension, that sees through all the whole *Series of Causes*, and hath a perfect Prospect not only of those Things that *actually* exist, but also of all that are *future* and *possible*. For how is it possible to foresee a *remote* Futurity in all its *particular* Circumstances, whose immediate Cause is either *unborn*, or *free* and *undetermined*, without having a *perfect* Inspection not only into the *Natures* and *Inclinations*, and *Tendencies* of Things, but also into all their particular *Conjunctions* and *Conspiracies*? and that Mind which sees into all these, must needs be *all-seeing* and having nothing *concealed* from it, that is either *present* or *future*, or *possible*. So that if there be any such thing as *Prediction* of *remote* and *contingent* Futurities, it must necessarily proceed from an *all-seeing* Mind; and if there be an all-seeing Mind that *oversees* the whole World, and accurately *inspects* all that is *past*, or *present*, or *to come* in it, is it imaginable that *such* a Mind should sit looking on as an *idle* Spectator, and *act* no part itself in such a vast and busy Scene of Things? For that it thus exactly *inspects* and *takes notice* of the World, is a plain Argument that it is greatly *concerned* for it; and that it should be greatly *concern'd* for it; and yet *do* nothing about it, nor *exercise* any *Providence* over it, is altogether *inconceivable*. And thus I have shewn, with all the

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Plainness I could, what *Evidences* there are to create in us a *Belief* of a *divine Providence*, which I persuade myself are such, as duly considered, cannot but prevail with Minds that are not *steel'd* against *all* Convictions, and utterly *abandoned* both of their *Reason* and *Modesty*.

S E C T. III.

The Objections against Providence considered and answered.

I Now proceed to the third and last Thing proposed to be treated of in this Chapter; and that is, to shew the *Insufficiency* and *Unreasonableness* of the common *Pretences* to *Infidelity* in this Matter; and here, not to insist upon all the *little* and *shameful* Cavils which have been made against Providence, which are so very *inconsiderable* that it would be too great a *Credit* to them to be seriously *confuted*; I shall insist upon those only which are the *common*, and do carry the *fairest* Shew of Reason with them, and they are these five:

I. That the Exercise of a Providence doth not *comport* with the *Majesty* of God.

II. That it doth not *consist* with the *Ease* and *Happiness* of God.

III. That it is not *reconcilable* with the manifold *Evils* which we behold in the World.

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IV. That if there were such a Providence, it could not admit of the unequal Divisions of *Goods* and *Evils* which are made in this World.

V. That it is not to be reconciled with the *wretched* State and Condition to which we behold the greatest Part of Mankind *abandoned*.

I. It is objected against the Being of Providence, that it doth not *comport* with the *Majesty* of God to take *notice of*, or *concern* himself about the *little* Affairs of this World. Which is such an Objection as carries its own *Answer* with it; for I would fain know which is most suitable to Majesty, to *sit still* or to *act*, to *wrap up* itself in everlasting *Sloth* and *Idleness*, or to *display* itself in a *vigorous Activity*? And if it be *greater*, and more *majestick*, as doubtless it is, for any Being to *employ* and *exercise* its Powers, than to let them *lie asleep* and make no *use* of them, I would fain know in what *higher Sphere* can God exercise his Powers than in governing the World. For to govern well is the *best* and *greatest* Thing that we can frame an Idea of; it is to *do* the *greatest Good*, to *dispense* the *noblest* Virtues, and to *shed forth* the *amplest* Sphere of Benefits. And therefore since the World is such a vast Dominion, doubtless the most *glorious* Employment that the *largest* Mind can undertake, is to *rule* and *govern* it; and there is nothing can be *greater* and more *Godlike*, than to sit at the *Helm* of this floating Universe, and *steer* its Motions to their Ends with a steady and unerring Hand. What therefore can God do more worthy of himself than to govern the World *well* and *wisely*? Or wherein can he better display the

the Glory of his *own* Perfections, than in keeping this mighty Engine in such an admirable *Order*, so as that though its Parts are infinite in *Number* and *Variety*, and in their several Lines of Motion do frequently cross and intersect each other, yet they do neither clash nor interfere, disturb nor confound one another, but in their different Functions mutually assist each other, and all conspire in a common Good, composing out of their infinite *Discords* a most elegant *Harmony*, in which mighty Performance there is Scope enough for an infinite *Power* to exert its utmost *Activity*, for an infinite *Wisdom* to employ its utmost *Skill*, for an infinite *Goodness* to put forth its utmost *Bene-ficence*.

So that to undertake this Province of governing the World, is so far from being beneath the Majesty of God, that it would be an unpardonable *Arrogance* for any but a *God* to undertake it; and if *Contrivance* be the End of *Wisdom*, *Action* of *Power*, *Bene-ficence* of *Goodness*, as doubtless they are, where can the infinite *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* of God find a more ample Sphere for *Action*, *Contrivance*, and *Bene-ficence*, than in the *Government* of the World? And if it be the proper Exercise of Majesty to govern, what can better comport with the greatest Majesty than to display itself in the Government of the largest Dominion, which is that of the World?

But then considering that God himself is the *Father* of all this great *Family* of Beings, how can it be beneath his Majesty to take care of his own *Off-spring*? Why should it be below him to provide for any Thing which was not below him to create?

create? If there be any Thing in this World so contemptible as not to deserve his *Regard*, why did he create it? If there be not, why should he disdain to govern it? And if every Thing in this World hath some *End* for the sake of which God thought it worthy to be one of the *Objects* of his Creation, why should he not as well think the constant *Directions* of it to that *End*, to be an Object *worthy* of his *Providence*?

II. It is farther objected against the Being of *God's Providence*, that it is inconsistent with his *Quiet* and *Happiness*. For to *attend* to such an infinite Number of Things as the *Government* of the World includes, cannot but *distract* his Thoughts, and thereby *disturb* him in the Enjoyment of himself. All which is a gross Mistake, arising from no other Cause but our measuring *God* by our selves; because we find our own Minds so *narrow*, and our own Powers so *limited*, as that we cannot without *Distraction* attend to many Things at once, therefore we conclude that this mighty Business of *governing* the World must needs be very uneasy to God: whereas if we considered God as a Being that is *infinitely perfect*, whose *Almighty Power* implies an *Ability* to do whatsoever is *possible*, and whose *infinite Knowledge* includes an universal *Prospect* of all Things past, present, and to come, this would easily convince us of the *Vanity* and *Falseness* of this Objection; for it is by reason of *Imperfection* that Beings operate with *labour* and *difficulty*; it is because their Powers are *weak*, and not *able* to conquer without *struggling* with the *Resistances* of the Objects upon which they operate; but against *perfect* and *infinite* Powers there

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ects can make such *Resistance* as to put them upon *Struggling* and *Labour* ; so that to an omniscient and omnipotent Mind there can be nothing difficult to be known or effected ; and it is altogether as easy to it to know all things that are knowable, and do all Things that are possible, as to know or do any one Thing whatsoever ; because whatsoever it doth, it doth perfectly. How then can the Government of the World be difficult and uneasy to God, whose Knowledge and Power are perfect and infinite, and consequently can inspect and govern all the Beings in the World with as much *Facility* as if they had only one Being to take care of ; and if one Man can with Ease manage one Business which he perfectly understands, why may not God manage all, who understands all better than we understand any one ; and suppose the Things of the World were infinite, yet since God's Knowledge and Power are infinite too, there is the very same Proportion of *Infinite* to *Infinite*, as of *One* to *One*.

For it is to be considered that the natural *Tendency* of infinite *Power* is to *Action*, of infinite *Wisdom* to *Contrivance*, of infinite *Goodness* to *Beneficence* ; and how can we imagine that it should be any *Disturbance* to God to follow the *Inclination* of his own Perfections ? And therefore since it is equally easy to his infinite Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness to exert themselves in a larger Sphere of Action, Contrivance and Beneficence as in a narrower, why should it more disturb him to govern a whole World than one single Being ? It would doubtless be rather a Disturbance to him to act nothing, to contrive nothing,

and to do *no Good*; because this would be to cross the Inclination of his own Perfections; but since it is as easy to him to exercise those Perfections about many things as about few; to exercise them about a world of things must rather be a *Delight* than a *Disturbance* to him, because the more he exercises them, the more he complies with their natural *Tendencies* and *Inclinations*.

And what though this World be a great and cumbersome Mass of Things; it can be no Labour to God to move and actuate it, who as an universal Soul is diffused through it, and vitally present with every Part of it; for he moves it not as Bodies move Bodies by Thrusting and Pressure, but as Souls move Bodies by Thought and Will; and as our Soul doth move its Body, and determine the Motion of its Members merely by Thinking and Willing, without any material Pressure, without any Machines or Engines, even so God, who is the *Great Soul* of the World, doth actuate every Part and regulate every Motion of it without any laborious Heavings or Thrustings merely by the *all-commanding* Influence of his own *Almighty* Thought and Will. And if it be no Labour to our Soul to Think and Will, and therewithal to move our Body, why should we think it any Labour to God by the same Operations to move the World? For suppose our Soul were cloathed with a Body as large as the *whole Universe*, and were but vitally present with every Part of it, it would doubtless move it all with as much Ease, and Command it every Way with as much Freedom as it doth the Body wherein it now Resides: How then can it be difficult to a perfect Mind which penetrates
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all through, and *co-exists* with every Part of this material World, to move and actuate the Whole, and moderate all the Motions of it according to its own Will and Pleasure?

III. It is farther objected against a *Providence*, that it is not consistent with the manifold Evils, both *Moral* and *Natural*, which we behold in this World. If there were a just and gracious Providence over-ruling the World, how can it be imagined that it should ever permit so many Irregularities as we every Day behold in Mens Lives and Manners, or suffer so many Calamities and Miseries to befall its Subjects? Both which, as I shall shew you, are very fairly consistent with a just and righteous Providence.

For as for the first, to wit, the *moral* Evils or Irregularities of Mens Manners, the *Permission* of them in the World is no more inconsistent with the *Goodness* of God's *Providence*, than his making of *free Agents* was with the *Goodness* of his *Nature*. For his *Permission* of Sin is no more than his permitting *free Agents* to act *freely*, and according to that *Liberty* to *Good* and *Evil* wherewith he framed and created them; and why may he not as well permit them to act freely as create them to act freely? But to be essentially determined to *Good*, so as not to have any natural *Liberty* to *Evils*, seems inconsistent with the *State* of a *Creature*; for there is no *Will* can be naturally and essentially determined to *Good*, which is not conducted by an infallible Mind; for whilst the *Mind* which is the Guide may possibly err, the *Will* which is guided by it must be liable to go astray. Since therefore no *Will* can be essentially good but

that which is guided by an infallible Mind, and since no Mind can be essentially infallible but one that is omniscient, it necessarily follows that to be free to Good and Evil is as natural to all reasonable Creatures, as to be finite in *Knowledge* and *Understanding*; and accordingly our Saviour declares that to be naturally essentially good is the incommunicable Prerogative of the divine *Nature*, *Luke* xviii. 19. and if so, then either God must have made us *free* to Good and Evil, or not have made us at all, and there must have been no such Orders of Being as *Men* and *Angels*, which are the *Crown* and *Glory* of all the Creation; and is it not much better that there should be such Beings, than that there should be no such Thing as *Liberty* to Good and Evil? And if it were not inconsistent with the Divine Goodness to create free Agents, why should it be inconsistent with it to permit them to act freely? 'Tis true indeed we are naturally more free to Evil than the *Angels*, and some *Angels* perhaps were more free to it than others; but what then? Was God obliged in Goodness to make all Kinds of Beings equally perfect? If so, there must have been but one Kind of Beings in the whole Universe, and consequently there must have been infinite Kinds of Beings that are capable of happiness for ever unmade, or for ever unprovided for. Wherefore since the Goodness of God was so infinitely fruitful as to communicate itself in different Degrees of Perfection to all *Possibilities* of Being, that so there might be no Kind wanting to compleat the Universe, it was requisite that there should be a mean Degree of Perfection between *Angels* and *Brutes*;
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otherwise there would have been a *Gap* and *Chasm* in the World, not only a possible Kind of Being wanting, but a Kind which by partaking both of *Reason* and *Sense of Spirit* and of *Matter*, is the *Σύνδεσμος ζωτικὸς τῶν τε ἄνω καὶ τῶν κάτω*, as *Simplicius* expresses it, *i. e. the vital Joint that clasps the upper and lower World together*; and if it were no way unsuitable to the Goodness of God to create the two *Extremes*, viz. *Angels* and *Brutes*, why should it be thought unsuitable to make a middle Nature between them?

It is true, by partaking of both Natures, we are not only free to Evil in common with *Angels*, but also liable to stronger Temptations to it than they; because we are placed in a tempting *Body* among a great many brutish *Passions* and *Appetites*, and that *Body* is placed in a tempting *World*, among a great many sensitive *Goods* and *Evils*, that are continually importuning those *Appetites* to *mutiny* against *Reason*, and to carry us away captive into *Folly* and *Wickedness*; but to place us in this State is so far from being inconsistent with the Goodness of God, that it is exactly pursuant to the *Design* of a most *wise* and *gracious* Providence. For since we are placed by the *Condition* of our *Natures* in a lower Rank of Being and Perfection than *Angels*, we have no more Reason to complain of that, than *Ants* or *Flies* have that they are not *Men*. But in this imperfect State the highest Good that Providence could design us was to put us into a State of *Trial* and *Probation*, wherein by the good Use of our Liberty we might by degrees fit our selves for, and at length arrive to a better and more raised Condition, and by an orderly

derly Progression from this rude and imperfect State, might in the different Periods of our Lives grow up into *higher* and more *excellent* Capacities, and at length ripen into Perfection. Now in order to our *Trial* it was requisite we should be placed among *Difficulties*, without which no *Proof* can be made of our *Virtues*, of our *Patience*, and *Temperance*, and *Chastity* and *Equanimity*, *Meekness* and *Sobriety*; all which are proper to us as Beings made up of *Angel* and *Brute*; from the *latter* of which Natures, all those *brutal* Appetites arise in us, in the good or bad Government whereof consists the Nature of human *Virtue* and *Vice*. So that this present State of our Life is intended by God for a *Field of Combat* between our *Sense* and our *Reason*, our *brutal* and *angelical* Nature, and that the *Victory* of our *Reason* might through the *Difficulty* of it be rendered more *glorious* and *rewardable*, God hath furnish'd its *Antagonist* with the Weapons of worldly *Temptation* to assault and oppose it, to try its *Strength* and *Mettle*, and to exercise both its *active* and *passive* Virtues; intending when it hath *conquered*, to translate us hence, as a *Reward* of our *Victory*, into a free and disintangled State, where we shall be vexed and enticed no more with the *Importunities* of *sensual* Lust and Affection, but to all Eternity enjoy the Serenity and Pleasure of a *pure*, *angelical* Nature. And what is there in all this that is any way unsuitable, yea, that is not every way answerable to the Goodness of Providence? 'Tis true, instead of *conquering*, we may, if we please, yield our selves *captive* to *Folly* and *Wickedness*; but what then? Is Providence to be blam'd for

for leaving Men's Hands at Liberty, because some have been so desperate as to cut their own Throats? It is sufficient that he hath propos'd to us *Reward* enough to encourage us to contend, and contributed to us *Assistance* enough to enable us to conquer, and having done all that becomes a *wise* and *good* Governor, to prevent our *Sin* and *Ruin*, who is to be blamed for it but ourselves? God leaves us at *Liberty* indeed among *Temptations* to *Evil*; and this the very *State* and *Composition* of our Natures requires; but all he designs by it, is to exercise our *Virtues*, and thereby to improve and train us up to a State of higher Perfection, and to furnish us with glorious Opportunities of fighting for and winning Crowns and Reward; and this is so far from any way reflecting on the *Goodness* of his Providence, that it is an *illustrious Instance* of it; and yet it is only thus far that he is concerned in the Being of Sin in the World; all the rest is owing to our own mad and desperate Abuse of our natural Liberty, to our willful Opposition to his gracious Intentions, and obstinate Resistance to his *powerful* Arts and Methods of *preventing* our Sin and Ruin. What then can be more unreasonable than for us to *object* against the *Goodness* of God's Providence that which is purely the Effect of our own *Madness* and *Folly*?

And if the Evil of *Sin* be no way inconsistent with the Goodness of Providence, much less is the Evil of *Misery*, since the *Generality* of those Evils which we suffer in this World are either the *natural* Effects, or the *just* Punishments, or the *necessary* Antidotes and Preventives of our Sin. And therefore when you come into a great School

of wild and unruly Boys, you may as well argue that there is no *Master* of it, because there are *Rods* and *Ferulas* in it, as that there is no *Providence* over this sinful World, because there are *Miseries* and *Afflictions* in it ; for upon the Being of *Sin* in the World, the Being of *Misery* is so far from being an Argument against Providence, that it is rather a Demonstration of it ; because a sinful World can no more be governed without *Misery*, than an unruly School without *Correction*.

IV. Another Objection that is made against Providence is that unequal Division of *Goods* and *Evils* that is made in the World. If there were a just Providence that over-ruled the World, one would think it should make a more visible Distinction between good and bad Men in the *Distribution* of its *Rewards* and *Punishments* ; whereas in the ordinary Course of things we see *all things happen alike to all*, and many times it fares *worst* with the *best*, and *best* with the *worst* of Men. Now because this is the greatest and most universal Objection that was ever urged against the *Providence* of God, I shall in answer to it endeavour to shew,
1. That it is for the most Part false and groundless, 2. That so far as it is true, it is no Argument at all against *Providence*.

First, I say, this Objection, that there is no Difference made among Men as to the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World, is in a great Measure false and groundless. For I make no doubt but in the ordinary course of things *good* Men are more prosperous even in this World than *bad* ; as for Times of *Persecution*, they are a just *Exception* from the general Rule of Providence ; because therein God to serve
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his *own* Glory, and the great Ends of Religion, exchanged with good Men *spiritual* for *temporal*, and *heavenly* for *earthly* Enjoyments, which is such an *Exchange* as no Man will account *Robbery*, that understands the just Value of those different Commodities.

It is true, it hath been an usual Complaint in all Times and Ages, that it fares *best* with the *worst*, and *worst* with the *best*; and through the *Commonness* of it, it is now grown into a *Maxim*. But it is to be considered that Men always pity the miserable and envy the prosperous, and that these Passions do naturally *bribe* their Judgments to think *worse* of the one, and *better* of the other than either deserve; for those whom we pity we are inclined to *love*, and those whom we love we are inclined to *think well* of; as on the contrary, those whom we envy we are inclined to *hate*, and those whom we hate we are inclined to *think ill* of; and then because God doth not *reward* and *punish* Men according to the Sentence that our *blind* Pity or *Envy* passes on them, we are ready to quarrel with his Providence. And besides, there are a World of close *Hypocrites*, that under a mighty *Shew* and *Ostentation* of Piety do secretly indulge themselves in sundry wastful and ruinous Vices, which many times reduce them to *Poverty* and *Misery*, and these we commonly rank among the *good* it fares *ill* with; as on the contrary, there are abundance of good Men, that in the Course of a reserved, modest and unaffected Piety, which makes but very little *Shew* in the Eyes of the World, are blest and prospered, and these we as *commonly* rank among the *bad* that *fare well*. Since therefore we are such in-

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competent Judges of good and bad Men, we shall be very careful how we *object* against the *Providence* of God such *Maxims* as are only founded on our own *fallacious* Observations. But could we *strip* ourselves of *Pity* and *Envy*, and *penetrate* into the *insides* of Men, I doubt not but we should soon be satisfied that good Men have much the Advantage of bad, even as to the Happiness and Prosperity of this World; for though perhaps there are many more bad Men *prospered* than good, because there are far more bad than good Men in the World, yet in *Proportion* to their *Numbers* I doubt not but the *prosperous Good* would far exceed the *prosperous Bad*, though there should be but *thirty* of the one to *forty* of the other; and supposing that in *Proportion* there were more bad Men than good advanced to *worldly Greatness*, (which yet is very doubtful, considering how prone we are to judge *ill* of *great Men*, and to reckon more of them into the Number of the bad than we ought, through *Envy* and *Misunderstanding* the Reasons of their Actions) yet it is to be considered, that the true State of worldly *Happiness* and *Prosperity* consists not in a great but in a moderate Fortune, and that the good Things of this World are no where so freely and entirely enjoyed, as in the *middle Region* between *Poverty* and *Riches*; for as *Poverty* is attended with *Famine*, and *Cold* and *Anguish*, so *Greatness* is attended with *Hurry* and *Tumult*, impaled with *Cares*, and imprisoned with *Pomp* and tedious Ceremony; so that the *truly* Unfortunate are the *Necessitous* and the *Great*, while the *middle* State, without partaking of the Evils of either, includes all that is *truly desirable* in *both* Extremes;

all their Poverty wants, and all that Greatness enjoys; and in this happy State I dare boldly affirm there are proportionably far more good Men than bad: For it is a very rare Thing for a good Man that is *honest* and *industrious*, and *depends* upon God for a Blessing, to be reduced to *extreme Necessity*; so *very rare*, that *David* in all his Life-time could not produce one Instance of it, *Psf. xxxvii. 25.* for *miserable* Poverty is usually the Consequence either of *Idleness* or *Luxury*, or *Faction* or *Knavery*; all which are *inconsistent* with true Goodness; and a good Man in any Condition on this Side *pinching* Necessity, is *ordinarily* even in this Life far more happy than the most *gay* and *prosperous* Sinner, whose *outward* Glory and Greatness is usually nothing but the *gaudy* Cover of a tragical *Inside*, of a Mind that is tortured with *Pride* and *Envy*, with *boundless* Hopes, *insatiable* Desires, and *horrible* Reflections, that dash and imbitter all his Enjoyments, while the good Man under his *mean* and *simple* Outside, carries a great and happy Soul, a contented Mind, a chearful Heart, and a calm Conscience, which mightily *sweeten* all his Enjoyments, and make his *homely* Morfel *out-relish* the most *studied* Luxuries. Let us therefore but judge impartially of Men, and but truly state what is the most happy Condition of *human* Life, and proportion the Number of the Good to the Bad, and balance the *Insidies* of the one with the *Outsides* of the other, and I doubt not but we shall be easily convinced that even in this Life the Good ordinarily fare much better than the Bad; for in true Computation *Necessity* and *Greatness* are the only *unfortunate* States of human Life, and in these there

are far more bad Men than good ; but between these two all Conditions are in a manner *indifferent* as to the Happiness of Men ; and in this happy Mean there are far more good Men than bad ; and then the Minds of good Men having infinitely the Advantage of the Minds of bad, as to the rendering their outward Condition happy, it is impossible but that *ordinarily* and *generally* they must be the more *happy* and *prosperous*.

Secondly, So far as the Maxim, that all *Things happen alike to all*, is *true*, it is *no* Argument at *all* against a Providence ; and that upon these following Accounts. 1. Because many of the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Punishments*, but in the necessary Course of secondary Causes. 2. Because the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World are in themselves so *mean* and *inconsiderable*, that it would be *beneath* the Wisdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the Distribution of them. 3. Because this Life is properly the State of our *Trial* and *Probation*, and not of our *Reward* and *Punishment*. 4. Because the *Goods* and *Evils* that befall us here are not so truly to be estimated by themselves as by their *Effects* and *Consequents*. 5. This *promiscuous* Distribution of Things, so far as it is, is very requisite to assure us of a *Judgment* to come. 6. Because the exact Adjustment of Things is reserved for a *future Judgment*.

I. The *happening of all things alike to all* is no Argument against Providence ; because many of the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Punishments*, but in the necessary Course of *second Causes*. For in this Life good
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and bad Men are so mingled together, that in Cases of common Calamity, what happens to the *one* must happen to the *other*, without a miraculous Interposál of Providence. Thus while God leaves *second Causes* to their *natural Course*, how is it possible that *War*, or *Plague*, or *Famine* should distinguish between the Good and bad that are *incorporated* together in the same *Societies*? and so long as free Agents are left to act freely, wicked *Parents* will frequently spoil their *Constitutions* by the repeated Excesses of their *Riot* and *Wantonness*; and while they do so, their Diseases, without a *Miracle*, will descend upon their *righteous* as well as *unrighteous* Posterity; and wicked *Neighbours*, whilst it lies in their way, or serves their *Interest*, will wrong and oppress the Just and Unjust without any *Distinction*. But you will say, why then doth not Providence *interpose* between second Causes and good Men, and *miraculously* protect them from their mischievous Effects? To which in short I answer, that in some extraordinary Cases God hath interposed, of which there are innumerable Instances both in *sacred* and *profane* History; but to expect that he should ordinarily and constantly do this, is very unreasonable, because it cannot be done without giving a perpetual *Disturbance* to the *Course* of Nature, which being in the whole most orderly and regular, full of admirable *Beauty* and *Contrivance*, ought not to be disturbed and inverted upon ordinary Occasions. For if the established Course of Things be wise and regular in the whole, why should we expect that God should be perpetually tampering with it, and inter-

interrupting and varying it by his immediate Interposals, as if he were *dissatisfied* with his own *Contrivance*, and upon every *Revisal* of this great Volume of the World, did still discover new *Erratas* in it to be corrected and amended. The Evils therefore which good Men suffer are not ordinarily so *momentous* as to oblige a *wise* and *good* God to *interrupt* the Course of Nature to *prevent* them; and it is much better that some *Violences* should be offered to good Men, than that a *constant* Violence should be offered to the *Nature of Things*; and since God can carry on his good Designs to good Men in a still and silent Path, and cause all their *adverse* Accidents to *unwind* of themselves, and at last to *clear* up into a blessed Close, is it not much better he should do it this way, than by offering *perpetual* Violence and Disturbance to Nature?

II. The *happening of all Things alike to all* is no Argument against a Providence, because the Goods and Evils of this World are so *mean* and *inconsiderable*, that it would be beneath the Wisdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the Distribution of them. It is no Part of Wisdom to be *nice* and *curious* about *Trifles*. It was ridiculous enough in *Caligula* to employ a mighty Army only to gather a great Heap of *Cockle-shells*; but when he had gathered them, it would have been much more ridiculous to have taken a great deal of Care to divide them amongst his Soldiers in exact Proportions to each one's *Merit* and *Desert*. Now tho' we look upon the Goods and Evils of this World, as Things of vast and mighty Moment, yet *God* who sees them with far better Eyes than we, knows very well that they are but

but *Trifles* in comparison of those *endless* Goods or Evils we must enjoy or suffer in another World, and that it is a very *inconsiderable* Thing whether we fare *well* or *ill* this Moment, who immediately after must fare *well* or *ill* for ever; and therefore he looks on it, as he justly may, as a thing *beneath* his infinite Wisdom, to be very *exact* and *curious* in dividing to us these *momentary* Trifles in just Proportions to our particular Deserts; and did we not strangely *magnify* them, by looking on them through the *false* Opticks of our own *fantastick* Hopes and Fears, we should be so far from objecting against God's *Providence* these unequal Distributions of them, and were they more exact and equal we should rather object against his *Wisdom*, as thinking it a very *mean* Employment for a Deity to be very *nice* and *curious* in proportioning such *momentary* Enjoyments and Sufferings to the Merit or Demerit of *immortal* Creatures. So that considering of what little Moment the present *Goods* and *Evils* are which good Men *suffer* and bad Men *enjoy*, they ought rather to be looked on as an Argument of God's *Wisdom* than as an Objection against his *Providence*; for he understands the just Value of Things, and knows that the best of these Worldly Goods are bad enough to be thrown away upon the worst of Men, and so expresses his just *Scorn* of these *admired* Vanities, by scattering them abroad with a *careless* Hand; for why should he partake of the Errors of vulgar Opinion, and express himself so very regardful of these Trifles as to put them in gold Scales, and weigh them out to Mankind by Grains and Scruples?

III. That *all Things here do happen alike to all* is no Argument against Providence, because this Life is properly the State of our *Trial* and *Probation*, and not of our *Reward* and *Punishment*. The divine Providence hath placed us here as *Candidates* and *Probationers* for those everlasting Preferments it designs us hereafter, that so by training and exercising us in all those excellent Virtues that are proper to our Natures, it may improve us from one Degree of Perfection to another, 'till at last it hath accomplished us for the heavenly State; in order to which Design it is necessary that there should be an unequal Distribution of Things, whereby good Men may sometimes suffer and bad Men prosper; otherwise there would be no *Occasion* for any of our *passive* Virtues, nor any *Trial* of our active. For Affliction is the Theatre of *Patience* and *Fortitude*, and *Resignation* to God, and without it there would be no Room in the Lives of good Men for the Exercise of those Virtues, which for want of Objects to act on, would rust and wax languid. Again, Difficulty is the Touchstone of our *Love* and *Faith* and *Ingenuity*; but should Providence be always *crowning* the Righteous, and *dragging* Offenders to Execution, such a Procedure would determine our Liberty, and leave us no Room for the Exercise of our *Faith* and *Ingenuity*; for then the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of Providence would be so sensibly and continually present with us, and so urgently press upon our Hopes and Fears, that it would be impossible for us not to believe in God, and next to impossible not to obey him; and being thus forced to believe and obey, what Excellency would there
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be in our Piety and Virtue; What *Charity* is it for a *Miser* to lend his Money upon Assurance of twenty *per Cent*? Or what *Loyalty* for a *Traytor* to discover his *Conspirators*, within Sight of a Rack. And just as little Virtue would there be in any of our good Works, were there an exact equality in the distributions of Providence. For then we should never do a good Work but upon the certain Prospect of an immediate Reward, nor repent of a bad one, but upon the irresistible Dread of some immediate Punishment. But in this inequality of Things wherein the Good often suffer, and the Wicked prosper, we are left to a free and unconstrained Condition, and whether we are *Virtuous* or *Vicious*, *Devout* or *Profane*, it is out of *Choice* and not of *Necessity*. So that now to believe and obey the sacred Dictates of Religion, is generous and ingenuous, and our Faith and Obedience is our *Virtue* and *Excellency*, because we believe and obey without Force and against Temptations and Difficulties.

And as this unequal State of Things is of absolute Necessity to try and exercise our Virtues, so it is also very assistant thereunto. For that Providence doth generally and not universally bless and prosper good Men, is a great support to a wise and rational Belief. For as a late excellent Author hath well observed, if things were constantly managed one way without any variation, we might be apt to conclude that the World was under the rigid Laws of a fatal Necessity; if on the other side there were no *Rule* observed, no Footsteps of *Method* in the Dispensations of Providence, we might be tempted to believe that *Chance* rules the World; but when we observe that in the Manage-

ment of things there is an Intermixture of these two, *viz.* that there is a general Rule, and that there are particular Exceptions from it, we have just reason to conclude that all is under a free Almighty Agent that rules the World according to the Determinations of his own Will. As this way of Providence, *viz.* to interweave into good Mens Fortunes *Adversity* with *Prosperity*, is in this respect very advantageous to their *Faith*, so is it also to the whole State of their *Virtue*; for as on the one hand a continued train of *prosperous* Events would be apt to *bloat* and *elevate* their Minds, so on the other a continued series of *Adversity* would be apt to *sink* and *depress* their Spirits, whilst this middle way of *Interchange* in their Condition balances them on both sides, and keeps them in an even, steady and well-poized Temper. Since therefore this Life is the State of our Trial, it is evident that an exact Equality of Things would be a much stronger Objection against the *Wisdom* of Providence, than all these present Inequalities are against the *Justice* of it. For *Hardships* and *Difficulties* are necessary to a state of *Trial*, and were good Men always *blest*, and bad Men always *punished*, this Life, instead of being a Probation to either, would be the Heaven of the one, and the Hell of the other; and since some Afflictions are necessary to try good Men, and some Prosperities to try bad, it would be a strange oversight of Providence, when it designs the Trial of both, to fix them in such a Condition, wherein no thorough Experiment can be made of either. So that for us to object against Providence for making such unequal Distributions in a state wherein it designs

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our Trial, is in Effect to object against *Wisdom* for acting most suitably to its own Designs.

IV. That *all things, here do happen alike to all* is no Argument against Providence, because the Goods and Evils that befall us here, are not so truly to be estimated by themselves as by their Effects and Consequents. For the Divine Providence, which runs through all Things, hath disposed and connected them into such a Series and Order, that there is no single *Event* or *Accident* but what is purely miraculous, but depends upon the whole System, and hath innumerable *Causes* antecedent to it; and innumerable Consequents attending it; and what the Consequents will be, whether *good* or *bad*, is beyond our Skill to prognosticate; so that though the Event be never so good or bad singly and apart by itself, yet in Conjunction with all those Consequents that will most certainly attend it, the best Event for all we know may prove most mischievous and the worst most beneficial to us. So that for us boldly to pronounce concerning the Good or Evil of Events, before we see the Train of Consequents that follow them, is very rash and inconsiderate. As for instance, you see a good Man oppressed with Sorrows and Afflictions, and a bad Man crowned with Pleasures and Prosperities; and considering these Things apart by themselves, you conclude that the one fares very ill, and the other very well; but did you at the same time see the Consequents of the one's Adversity and the other's Prosperity, it is probable you would conclude the quite contrary, viz. that the good Man's *Adversity* was a *Blessing*, and the bad Man's *Prosperity* a *Curse*. For I dare boldly

affirm that good Men generally reap more substantial Benefit from their Afflictions, than bad Men do from their Prosperities ; the one smarts indeed at present ; but what follows ? perhaps his *Mind* is cured by it of some Disease that is ten times worse to him than his outward Affliction, of *Avarice* or *Impatience*, of *Envy* or *Discontent*, of *Pride* or *vanity* of *Spirit* ; his Riches are lessened, but his Virtues are improved by it ; his Body is impaired, but his Mind is grown sound and hale by it, and what he hath lost in Health or Wealth, or Pleasure or Honour, he hath gained with Advantage in Wisdom and Goodness, in Tranquillity of Mind and Self-enjoyment. And methinks no Man, who believes he hath a *Soul*, should grudge to suffer any tolerable Affliction for the bettering his *Mind*, his *Will* and his *Conscience*. On the other hand the bad Man triumphs and rejoices at present ; but what follows ? His Prosperity either shrivels him into Miserableness, or melts him into Luxury ; the former of which impoverishes, and the latter diseases him ; for if the former be the Effect of his Prosperity, it increases his Needs, because before he needed only what he had not, but now he needs both what he hath not and what he hath ; his covetous Desires treating him as the Faulkner doth his Hawk, his luring him off from what he hath seized to fly at new Game, and never permitting him to prey upon his own Quarry ; and if the latter be the Effect of his Prosperity, that is, if it melts him into Luxury, it thereby wastes his Health to be sure, and commonly his Estate too ; and so whereas it found him poor and well, it leaves him poor and diseased, and only took him
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up from the *Plow*, and sets him down at the *Hospital*. In general. while he is possessed of it, it only bloats and swells him, makes him proud and insolent, Griping and Oppressive, pampers and enrages his Lust, stretches out his Desires into an insatiable Bulimy, sticks his Mind full of Cares and his Conscience of Guiles, and by all these woful Effects it inflames his Reckoning with God, and treasures up Wrath for him against the Day of Wrath; so that comparing the Consequents of the good Man's *Adversity* with those of the bad Man's *Prosperity*, it is evident that the former fares well even in his worst Condition, and the latter ill in his best. *It's well for me, saith good David, that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy commandment,* Psalm cxix. 67. But on the contrary, *when the wicked spring as the grass, saith the same Author, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever,* Psalm xcii. 7. If then in the Consequents of Things good Men are blessed in their Afflictions, and bad Men plagued in their Prosperities, as it is apparent they generally are, these unequal Distributions are so far from being an Argument against Providence, that they are a glorious Instance of it. For wherein could the Divine Providence better express its *Justice* and *Wisdom* together, than by benefiting the Good and punishing the Bad by such cross and improbable Methods?

V. *That all Things here do happen alike to all,* is no Argument against Providence, because it is very requisite it should often do so, to assure us of a Judgment to come. For were the Affairs of

this World managed with that exact Equality as that the Good did never suffer, nor the Bad escape unpunished, we should be deprived of one of the best moral Arguments of a *future Judgment*. For as on the one Hand should Providence never reward the Good nor punish the Bad in this Life, but confound them together without any Distinction, it might tempt us to despair of any *just Retribution* from it in the *Life to come*; so on the other Hand, were the Goods and Evils of this Life weighed out to Men in *exact* Proportions to their Merit and Demerit without any *Inequality*, we might be tempted to think that there is no Need of, and consequently no *Ground* to expect any *Judgment to come*. For what Occasion would there be for any *future Judgment* if all Things were already exactly *balanced and adjusted*? and therefore as to *confirm* us in the Belief of the *Justice* of Providence, it was requisite the same plain Instances should be given of its distinguishing the Good from the Bad by present *Rewards and Punishments*; so to *confirm* us in the Expectation of a *Judgment to come*, it was no less requisite that there should be some *Inequality* in the present *Management and Distribution* of things, and that the Goods and Evils of this World should not be administered with that exact Regularity as to prevent the *Necessity* of a *Day of Judgment*; but that there should be undecided Cases enough remaining for a *future Tribunal* to adjust and determine. So that as in the present Management of Things there is *Equality* enough to induce us to believe a just Providence; so there is also *Inequality* enough to induce us to expect a *future Judgment*; God having wisely provided in his present

sent Administration of Things, to give us Instances enough of his just Procedure towards the Good and Bad, and yet to leave us Instances enough of unrewarded Virtue and prosperous Wickedness, to assure us that he intends an after Reckoning. For how can we reflect upon these repeated Examples of just *Reward* and *Punishment*, which in every Age almost God sets before us, and not believe that he governs the World? And how can we reflect upon those manifold Evils which some good Men suffer, and Goods which some bad Men enjoy, without believing that he hath appointed a Day wherein he will adjust these Inequalities, and vindicate the Cause of oppressed Virtue, and crush triumphant Wickedness into everlasting Confusion?

VI. And lastly, *That all Things here do happen alike to all*, is no Argument against Providence, because the exact Adjustment of Things is reserved for a future Judgment. I confess were God to make no other Distribution to the Just and Unjust, but what is made in this Life, the Inequality of it would be a strong Objection against his Providence; but then considering that this cloudy Scene of Things will shortly close up in a righteous Judgment, wherein for the Evils which the Good have suffered they shall be awarded with an *eternal Happiness*, and for the Goods which the Bad have enjoyed they shall be doomed to *everlasting Wretchedness*, this is sufficient to vindicate the Justice of Providence were these present Inequalities a thousand times greater than they are. For suppose that after a short melancholy Dream good Men were to live happily, and after as short a

pleasant one bad Men were to live wretchedly but for a thousand Years in this World; we might as well object against Providence this unequal Distribution of the melancholy Dream to the Good, and the pleasant one to the Bad, notwithstanding the succeeding thousand Years of their Happiness and Misery, as we do the Sufferings of the Righteous and Prosperities of the Wicked, which bear far less Proportion to that Eternity of Happiness and Misery that is to succeed them, than the Sorrow or Pleasure of a Moment's Dream doth to a Thousand Years real Calamity or Blessedness.

For the Providence of God from the first to the last is all but one continued Plot, like that of a well-contrived Comedy, which at first is very obscure and intricate; so that by what is past or present there is no guessing at the Conclusion; for all through the intermediate Acts, Virtue and Honour fight their way through Difficulties and Disappointments, and sometimes the Hero acts a sad, and sometimes the Villain a prosperous Part, at which the unskilful Spectator grieves, and is ready to damn the Poet for distributing such unequal Fates; but then in the fifth and last Act, all the cross Accidents clear up, and issue in a fair Conclusion; and in the close of all, the Hero is Crowned, and the Villain hissed off the Stage. Let us therefore have but the Patience to stay 'till Providence hath finished its whole Plot, and closed up all its mighty Scenes in the general Judgment of the World, and then we shall see all these Inequalities set right, and the Fates of good and bad Men determined by a most just Award.

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But for us to quarrel at Providence now, who are yet got no farther, it may be, than the *Middle* of the great *Drama*, and to *find fault* with its Procedure for *crossing* the Good, and *prospering* the Bad, is rudely to over - turn the Stage before the *Entrance* into the *fifth* Act, and to *hiss* off the *Almighty* Poet for not *compleating* his Design before he is arrived to the *Conclusion*. And thus I have endeavoured to answer more at large this Objection against Providence, because it hath been more insisted on than any other, and hath more generally *stumbled* Men's Belief of Divine Providence.

V. And lastly, it is farther *objected*, that the Being of a just and good Providence, is not to be reconciled with that wretched State and Condition to which we behold the greatest Part of Mankind abandoned. For if there were a good Providence that over - ruled the Affairs of this World, how is it imaginable that ever so great a Part of Mankind as the *Infidel World* includes, should be left so utterly destitute as they are of the *Knowledge of God*, and of the *Means* of attaining their *everlasting Happiness*? to which I shall briefly answer these three Things:

I. That the *Infidel World* is not perhaps left so utterly destitute as we are apt to *imagine*; for they have the *Law of Nature* to direct them, by which alone they must be *tried*, and *stand or fall* at the Day of Judgment; which as to the main *Strokes* of their Duty, is so plain and intelligible, that no sincere Inquirer can be ignorant of it; and if when they may understand it they will not, or if when they do understand it, they wilfully transgress

transgress and violate it, the Divine Providence hath been sufficiently good to them to leave them for ever *inexcusable*. For so far as their Ignorance is *invincible* it is not their *Sin*, nor shall they ever be accountable for it, or for any sinful *Omission* or *Commission* thence proceeding; and if they only answer for not *understanding* their Duty when they *might*, or for not *performing* it so far as they *understood* it, they can have no Reason to complain that they are *hardly dealt* with. But then,

II. As they have not those vast Advantages that we have of *becoming* good, and *growing up* into the State of Perfection and Happiness, so proportionably less Degrees of *Good* will be *accepted* of those that do well, and less Degrees of *Punishment* exacted of all those that do ill; for that Maxim of our Saviour, *Luke xii. 48. To whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required*, necessarily implies the contrary, *viz.* that to whomsoever *less* is given, of him *less* shall be *required*; and if so, it is certain that so much as their Means of being good are less than *ours*, so much the less good God will accept of them than of us; and as God will accept less *Good* of the *best* Infidels, so he will exact less *Punishment* of the *worst*; for so our Saviour himself hath assured us, that it will be more tolerable for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, in the last Day, than for those who persist in their *Unbelief* and *Disobedience* in Despight of the Proposals of the Gospel. If then in Proportion to their present *Disadvantages* less Good will be *accepted* of those who make any Improvement, and less *Punishment* *exacted* of them
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who make none, neither the one sort nor the other hath any Reason to complain; and though their Condition were worse than it is, yet under these Circumstances it would be fairly *consistent* with the *Goodness* of the Divine Providence. But then,

III. And lastly, Though their Condition were a great deal worse than it is, yet it would be very unreasonable for us to *object* it against the *Goodness* of the Divine Providence, unless we better understood than we do, how God will dispose of them in the *other* World. Indeed if Men's Fate consisted in what they suffer and enjoy in this Life, we might better judge of Providence by what is *before us*; but since our main State is beyond the Grave, whatever befalls us here is very inconsiderable, compared with what we must suffer or enjoy hereafter; and as for the present Disadvantages which the heathen World lies under, they are but very short and momentary, and if Providence pleases, it can abundantly *compensate* them in the *World to come*; and therefore since yet we know not what it will do, as having no Revelation in the Case, it becomes us to *suspend* our Judgment 'till the *Event* hath *determined* it.

This we know, that Providence hath Ways enough, and Time enough too between this and the Day of Judgment, to supply these *destitute* Souls with all those spiritual *Advantages* in the *other Life*, which for Reasons best known to itself it hath hitherto withheld from them; it may if it pleases extend their *Trial* and *Probation* beyond this Life, and discover in the other Life the Light of the *Gospel*, to so many of them at least as
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have here made any tolerable Improvements under the Light of *Nature*, and if they make good Use of it, *reward* them accordingly. For tho' we Christians have no Reason to expect any farther Trial after this Life is expired, because we have passed the *utmost* Trial already, yet who knows but God may make a farther Trial of those in the other Life, upon whom the great Experiment of the Gospel was never yet made; and therefore since Providence can yet be infinitely good to them notwithstanding their wretched Condition at present, and since for all we know it will be so, we ought not to object against it its present Disregard of them, 'till we see the final Issue of Things; for that their present Condition is so bad is no Ground for us to argue against Providence, unless we were sure it would *never* be *better*; Because for all we know it may yet be rendered good enough not only to justify but to glorify the Goodness of God's Providence towards them.

And now to conclude this great Argument. Since we see how necessary the Belief of Providence is to our being *truly religious*, and what unanswerable Evidence there is of the *Truth* and *Reality* of it, what remains but that we heartily endeavour, by a calm, fix'd, and impartial Consideration of these Things, thoroughly to instruct ourselves in the *Nature*, and firmly to establish ourselves in the *Belief* of it: for our Religion must necessarily *ebb* or *flow* according as it is influenced more or less by our *Understanding* and *Belief* of the Divine Providence, which are the great Principles that move and govern it. For every Branch of the Divine Providence is an in-
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exhaustible Fountain of religious *Rhetoric* and *Persuasion*, and in this single Proposition, that God *upholds* and *governs* the World, there are a thousand times more Inducements to Piety and Virtue, than in all other Topicks in the World. But how pregnant soever it is with Arguments, and how powerful soever its Arguments are, 'tis impossible it should prevail upon any reasonable Mind that understands not the *Force*, and believes not the *Truth* of it ; for all the possible Access which outward Objects have to our Minds, is through our *Knowledge* and *Belief* of them, without which the most *momentous* Proposals are no more capable of affecting us, than one of *Tully's* Orations is of calming the North-wind ; but he who firmly believes the *Truth*, and understands the full *Emphasis* of a Divine Providence, must necessarily be affected by it, if he be but within the *Reach* or *Power* of Persuasion ; and unless his Will be impreguably fortified against all the *Force* of *Argument* and *Reason*, he will find himself so besieged with Motives on every Side, persuading him to submit to the Obligations of Religion, that it will be almost impossible for him to defend himself against their powerful Importunities. For what Man in his Wits can sit unconcerned under the lively Belief that he is in the Hands of a most *just* and *gracious*, *all-wise*, and *Almighty Providence*, that is conscious to his inmost *Thoughts* and *Purposes*, and beholds all his Actions with infinite *Complacency* or *Abhorrence* ; that hath the Disposal of his *Life* and his *Soul*, and of all the Goods he can hope, for and all the Evils he can fear, and will certainly reward him

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a thousand-fold if he doth well, and if he doth ill as certainly pursue him with a dire *Revenge*? This Belief carries with it such constraining *Terrors* and *Allurements* as cannot but affect all reasonable Minds, and finally prevail with their *Hopes* and *Fears* against all contrary Temptations. Wherefore if we would fix the Obligations of Religion upon our Minds, it concerns us above all Things to be thoroughly instructed in the *Nature*, and confirmed in the *Belief* of the divine Providence.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Of the Necessity of believing divine Rewards and Punishments in order to our being truly Religious.

HUMAN Nature is framed to move upon the Hinges of *Hope* and *Fear*, and to be elicited and drawn forth in Action either by the Proposal of some *attainable* Good, or Prospect of some *avoidable* Evil, the *former* of which begets Hope in us, and that Pursuit; the *latter* Fear, and that *Flight* and *Avoidance*; and accordingly we find all Laws address to the *Hopes* and *Fears* of Men, with Proposals of *Reward* and *Punishment*, as to the *Master-springs* and *Principles* of their Action, by which they are moved to do or forbear according as they are required and enjoined. And indeed to give *Laws* to Men without inforcing them with *Rewards* and *Punishments*, would be to leave it indifferent whether they *obey'd* them or *no*, which is inconsistent with the Nature of Laws; for Laws necessarily imply an *Obligation* to Obedience; but what Obligation could we have to obey them, did they leave it indifferent as to any Good or Evil accruing from it, whether we *obey'd* them or *no*; for if it will be as well for us one way as the other, what matter is it which way we determine ourselves? And this holds good in nothing more than in the Matter of our Obedience

ence to the Laws of Religion, to which our corrupt Nature is above all Things backward and averſe; all that ſpiritual Exerciſe which thoſe Laws require being quite againſt the Grain of our earthly and ſenſual Inclinations; ſo that were we not drawn to it by the *Hope* of Good, and driven by the *Fear* of *Evil*, to be ſure our own bad Natures would keep us at an eternal Diſtance from it; but unleſs we believe God to be a *Rewarder* of thoſe that obey, and a *Puniſher* of thoſe that deſpiſe him, we have no Ground to hope for any *Good*, or to dread any *Evil* at his Hands.

For unleſs we believe that he will crown thoſe that ſerve him with ſome Mark of his *Favour*, how can we think he is pleaſed with them; there being no other way for him to expreſs his being pleaſed, but by crowning them with ſome ſignal Reward; and if he be not pleaſed with thoſe that ſerve him, to be ſure he is not diſpleaſed with thoſe that neglect him; and if he be not diſpleaſed with them, what Reason have we to apprehend that he will puniſh them? Thus the *Unbelief* of God's being a *Rewarder* of thoſe that obey him draws after it an *Unbelief* of his being a *Puniſher* of thoſe that deſpiſe him, and ſo on the contrary. For unleſs we believe him to be ſo much concerned for his Service as to puniſh thoſe that neglect it, we have no Reason to think he is ſo much concerned for it as to *reward* thoſe that *embrace* it. So that the *Belief* and *Unbelief* of God's being a *Rewarder* and a *Puniſher* do by neceſſary Conſequence mutually imply each other; and unleſs we believe both, there is no Reason we ſhould believe either. And when
our

Our Nature is so *averse*, as it is, to his Service; what should *induce* us to *serve* him when we expect no good from him, or *hinder* us from *slighting* him when we fear no *Evil*? And what is there can *bring us home* to God when we are *carried away* from him with an *impetuous* Tide of *corrupt* Inclinations, and have neither *Hope* nor *Fear* to bound or restrain it? So that considering the *Aversion* of our Nature to God's Service, it is morally impossible we should ever be heartily *reconciled* to it without being drawn with the *Hope* of Reward, and driven with the *Fear* of Punishment.

In the Prosecution of this Argument I shall endeavour to shew,

First, How *far* it is necessary that our *Belief* of divine *Rewards* and *Punishments* should *extend*.

Secondly, What *Evidence* there is to induce us to *believe* them.

Thirdly, By what *Means* this is to be *begotten* and *confirmed*.

S E C T. I.

How far it is necessary that our Belief of Divine Rewards and Punishments should extend.

FOR to induce us to submit to the Obligations of Religion, it is by no Means *sufficient* that we believe in the *general*, that God will *reward* us if we do well, and *punish* us if we do

wickedly. For this we may firmly believe, and yet at the same time prefer the *Pleasures* of Sin as much greater Goods than the *Rewards* of Virtue, and dread the *Difficulties* of Virtue as much greater Evils than the *Punishments* of Sin; wherefore to render our Belief of divine Rewards and Punishments an *effectual* Principle of Religion, these four Things are necessary.

First, That we should believe that God is so far a Rewarder of those that serve him, and so far a Punisher of those that neglect him, as to make a plain and sensible Distinction between them.

Secondly, Considering how promiscuously the Goods and Evils of this World are distributed among good and bad Men, it is necessary we should believe, that there is a *future* State of Rewards and Punishments.

Thirdly, It is necessary we should believe those *future* Rewards and Punishments to be such as do infinitely transcend any Good we can reap by our Sins, and any Evil we can incur by doing our Duty.

Fourthly, It is necessary we should believe that there is no other way for us to avoid those Punishments but by forsaking our Sins, or to acquire those Rewards, but by submitting to our Duty.

I. It is necessary we should believe that God is so far a Rewarder of those that serve, and so far a Punisher of those that neglect him, as to make a plain and sensible Distinction between them. For unless we believe that God makes some Distinction between those that serve and those that neglect him,

him, we shall confound Good and Evil in our own Apprehensions, and look upon all human Actions as indifferent, and thereby dissolve all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Religion. For Things are in themselves, as they are in the *Judgment* and *Esteem* of God, who cannot be mistaken in estimating their Natures; and therefore unless there be some Distinction between *Men* and *Men*, and *Actions* and *Actions*, in the Esteem of God, they must be all alike and indifferent in their own Natures. And if all Actions are indifferent in themselves, we are free from all the Ties and Obligations of Religion; and it is left indifferent to us whether we will *worship* God or *blaspheme* him. So that unless we believe that God makes some *Distinction* between the *Good* and *Bad*, Religion can have no Force at all upon our Minds.

But now there is no other way for God to *distinguish* between *Men* and *Men*, but by *rewarding* and *punishing* them; because if he make any Distinction in his *Affections* between us, we may be sure his *Love* will incline him to *reward*, and his *Hatred* to *punish* us; and since it is as easy to him to follow his Inclination as not, since he can reward where he loves, and punish where he hates, without any *Disturbance* to his own *Happiness*, what should hinder him from doing it, supposing that he really loves or hates, or makes any Distinction in his Affections between those that serve and those that neglect him? So that unless he reward the one and punish the other, he can make no visible Distinction in his Affections between them. If he be contrarily affected to good and bad Men, his *Affections* will infallibly appear in his

Actions ; but if he use them *alike*, it is plain they are *alike* to him. So that unless we believe that God *distinguishes* between good and bad Men by rewarding and punishing them, we must look upon both as *indifferent* to him, and believe that he concerns himself neither with the *one* nor the *other* ; and if we think it is indifferent to God, whether we are *good* or *bad*, to be sure it will not be indifferent to us, whose Natures are so *biassed* with *bad* Inclinations, which having neither Hope nor Fear to *restrain* them, will run towards bad Objects without *Rub* or *Interruption*. And what Likelihood is there that *we* who are so *prone* and *inclinable* to Evil, should *concern* our selves in the Service of God, whilst we look upon it as a thing *indifferent* to him whether we *serve* him or *no* ?

Wherefore to the *subduing* our Minds to the Obligations of Religion, it is necessary we should believe that God is so *far* a Rewarder of good, and Punisher of bad Men, as to make a sensible Distinction between them, and demonstrate that he is *differently* affected towards them. For to what End should we serve a God that takes *no Notice* of us, that regards not what we do, but sits above in the Heavens as an *unconcerned* Spectator of our Actions ? Why should we *cross* our own Inclinations, and *forsake* our beloved Lusts for his sake, when it is altogether *indifferent* to him *what* we do, or *whither* we go, or what *becomes* of us ?

II. Considering how *promiscuously* the Goods and Evils of this Life are *distributed* among good and bad Men, it is necessary that we should believe there is a *future* State of Rewards and Punishments.

nishments. For tho' *sometimes* in this Life God rewards good Men, and punishes bad with such signal and remarkable Goods and Evils as are sufficient Indications of the vast Distinction he makes between them, yet this is *extraordinary*, and besides the *constant* and *regular* Course of his Providence, which for *wise* and *excellent* Ends and Purposes doth ordinarily scatter Good and Evil among Men with an *open* and *undistinguishing* Hand ; in-
somuch that as the wise Man observes, *Eccles. ix.* 1, 2, 3. *No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him ; all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and as the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath ; this is an evil among all things that are done under the Sun, that there is one event to all.* Since therefore God's Love of good Men, and Hatred of bad appears not by any thing *before us*, we must either conclude that they are both indifferent to him, which would be to *rase* the very *Foundations* of Religion, or that there is a *future* State of Rewards and Punishments, wherein there will be no more such *promiscuous* Distributions, no more such *cross coupling* of Prosperity with *Vice*, and Misery with *Virtue*, but all Things will be adjusted *suitably* to Men's *Deserts* and *Qualifications*, and those that are good *advanced* to immortal Glory and Honour, and those that are bad *depressed* into eternal Shame and Confusion. For the Difference which God makes between them in the *present* Course of his Providence is too *small* and *indiscernible* to induce us to believe that he makes *any* Difference between them in his *Esteem* and *Affection* ; and therefore either

we must believe that there is another State wherein he makes a far wider Difference between them, or conclude that they are both indifferent to him, and that he hath no more Regard to the one than the other, or that he hath no Regard at all to either, which, as I shewed before, utterly *dissolves* the Obligations of Religion.

III. It is necessary we should believe those Future Rewards and Punishments to be such as do infinitely *transcend* any Good we can reap in our sinful *Neglect* of God, and any Evil we can incur by our *Submission* to him. It is true, were our Natures equally inclined to *submit* or to *neglect* him, we should need no more Good and Evil to move us one way than the other; but the same Proportion of *Goods* and *Evils* which tempts us now to *forsake* and *abandon* him, would equally tempt us to *serve* and *obey* him: But alas, this is far from our Case; for in *submitting* to God we move *counter* to our selves, we cross the *Grain* of our *degenerate* Nature, and run away from our dearest Inclinations: whereas in *forsaking* him, we *row* with the *Tide*, and are *driven* on with an *impetuous* Current of sinful Lusts and Affections; and the Case being thus, the Temptations of the one Side must be incomparably *greater*, if ever they prevail with us, than they need be on the other. For Men are easily tempted to act in *Compliance* with their own Inclinations; and the *smallest* Goods or Evils that can be proposed to them from without, will readily induce them to do what they have a mind to; but to prevail with a Man to do that which he is extremely averse to, to act against *Nature*, and live in *Defiance* with his own Inclinations, requires a
mighty

mighty Force of outward Temptation; and it must be a very great Good that he will not lose, a very formidable Evil that he will not incur, rather than enter into any Course of Action that is irksome and ungrateful to his Nature. So that unless we believe the *Goods* and *Evils* of the other World to be incomparably greater than all the *Pleasures* of Sin, and all the *Sufferings* of Piety and Virtue, there will not be Force enough in our Faith to persuade us; because those future Goods and Evils move against Nature, and persuade us to a Course of Life we are extremely averse to; whereas these present ones join Hands with our Inclinations, and find a ready *Concurrence* in our Wills and Affections; and a very small Temptation will prevail against a great one, when it hath Nature, that *bosom Orator*, to *solicit* and *plead* for it. Wherefore unless we believe the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of a *future* State to be such as *infinitely* outweigh those present Goods and Evils that tempt us to Sin, they will never be able to prevail against them; because they must not only out-tempt them, but, which is the much harder Task of the two, they must out-tempt the *Reluctances* of our *degenerate* Nature; and yet for *future* Goods and Evils to out-tempt present ones is not so easy a Matter neither; especially if those future ones are invisible and out of the Ken of our *Sense*, which is the Case here. For *Futurity* lessens all Objects to the *Mind*, even as *Distance* doth to the *Eye*, and makes Things appear to us much smaller than they are in their own Natures: So that the *Futurity* of the Rewards and Punishments of the other Life, are a mighty *Disadvantage* to them when they stand

in Competition with the present Goods and Evils ; because the latter appear to us in their full Proportion and Magnitude, with all their tempting Circumstances about them ; whereas the *former* exhibit to us a *dim* and *confused* Landskip of Things afar off, of Things which we never *saw* nor *felt*, and which by Reason of their *Distance* imprint very *dark* Ideas on our Minds. And as their *Futurity* *lessens* their Appearance, and renders it *confused* and *indistinct*, so their *Invisibilty* *weakens* their *Force* and *Influence* on our Minds, which no Objects can so nearly affect as those that strike upon our *Senses*. So that unless by an *immense* Magnitude they *compensate* for being *future*, and *insensible*, it is impossible they should prevail with such Minds as *ours* against *present* and *sensible* Goods and Evils. Wherefore to render our Belief of a future State *effectual* to reduce us to God and our Duty, it is *absolutely* necessary we should believe the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of it to be *infinitely greater* than all the *Goods* and *Evils* that can tempt us to Sin ; and that not only because our Natures are extremely *averse* to that which *these* Rewards and *Punishments* tempt us to, but because the Goods and Evils which tempt us the contrary way have the *prevailing* Advantages of being *present* and *sensible*.

IV. And lastly, It is necessary we should believe that there is no other way for us to acquire these Rewards or avoid these Punishments, but by *submitting* to the Obligations of Religion. For to be thoroughly *convinced* and *persuaded* of the *immense* Rewards and Punishments of the other Life, is by no means *sufficient* to reduce us unto God, so long as we do but *dream* of any *possible* way to obtain

obtain those Rewards and to avoid those Punishments without submitting to *Him*, to which above all imaginable ways our corrupt Nature hath the greatest Antipathy. So that though we were never so much convinced of the absolute necessity of escaping Hell and purchasing Heaven, yet if at the same time we have a prospect of any other way or means of effecting it, to be sure we shall shun this, this most ungrateful one of forsaking our Sins and returning to God. And if listing ourselves into Godly Parties, or putting on a demure and sanctified Countenance; if being Moped, Dejected or Unsociable; if Whining or Fasting, or long Prayers, or an affected Club, or rigid observance of holy Times; if consuming our Lives in a bare-footed Pilgrimage, or wearing a Hair Shirt, or whipping our Bodies, or spending our Estates on Masses and Indulgencies; if being made free of a holy Confraternity, or visiting Altars and Shrines, or numbering Prayers, like Faggots by a Tally of Beads; if these or any of these will but secure us of Heaven and from going to Hell, we shall think them a thousand times more tolerable and easy than to submit our Wills to God in all the instances of true *Piety* and *Virtue*; in the doing of which we must strangle the corrupt Inclinations of our Nature, tear our beloved Lusts from our Hearts, rack off our earthly Affections from their Lees, and refine and spiritualize them into a divine Zeal, and Love, and Devotion, than which there is nothing in the World more irksome to a degenerate Nature. So that until we are reduced to an utter despair of reaping the Rewards and escaping the Punishments of the other Life by any other

Means

Means than this of *submitting* ourselves to the Obligation of Religion, our *Faith* will be altogether *ineffectual*.

S E C T. II.

What Evidence there is to induce us to believe these future Rewards and Punishments.

THAT there are future *Rewards* and *Punishments* is a Doctrine *universally* assented to by all *Ages*, and *Nations*, and *Religions*, and there is scarce any *first Principle* in Philosophy, in which Mankind are more generally agreed. Thus among the heathen *Poets*, *Divines*, and *Philosophers*, there is an *unanimous* Acknowledgment of these *future States*, although their *Descriptions* of them are generally nothing but the *Dreams* of an *extravagant Fancy*. For so as *Josephus* observes, speaking of the *Essenes* Doctrine concerning the future State of the Blessed, Ταῖς μὲν ἀγαθαῖς ψυχαῖς ὁμοδοξῶντες πᾶσιν Ἑλλήνων, &c. i. e. *They teach, as all the Greek Nations also do, that for good Souls there are blessed States prepared beyond the Ocean in a Region that is always free from Rain and Snow, and excessive Heats, being perpetually fanned with gentle Breezes from the Ocean; which Description he hath translated almost verbatim out of the 4th Book of Homer's Ulysses, where he brings in Proteus thus bespeaking Menelaus—*σεῖς ἡλύσιον πεδίου*—*καὶ πέριπ' αὖ γαίῃ, &c. i. e. *The Gods shall send thee*

thee to the Fields of Elysium which lie on the utmost Parts of the Earth, where thou shalt live secure and happy, there being neither Rain, nor Snow, nor Winter, but the blessed Inhabitants are perpetually refreshed with the gentle breathing of cold Zephyrs from the Ocean. Plato tells us of an easy Law concerning Men, Καὶ αἰὲν καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν μὲν δικαίως τὸν βίον διέλθουσα καὶ ὁσίως, ἐπειδὴν τελευτήσῃ, εἰς μακάρων νήσεως ἀπίουσα, οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ ἐκτὸς κακῶν, τὸν δὲ ἀδίκως καὶ ἀθίως, εἰς τὸ τῆς τίσεως καὶ δίκης δεσμοτήριον, ὃ δὲ τάρταρον καλεῖται, εἶναι, i. e. which was always and is still in force among the Gods, that those who lived just and holy Lives should after their Death go into the Isles of the Blessed, where they should enjoy all manner of Happiness without the least Intermixture of Misery; but that those who lived here unjustly and ungodly should be sent into that Prison of just Punishment, which is called Hell, Plat. Gorg. p. 312. Thus also Tully Tuscul. lib. 1. Permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium, i. e. We believe, as all Nations do, that the Souls of Men do survive their Bodies; and to name no more, Seneca, Epist. 117. tells us, Cum de animarum æternitate differimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus omnium aut Timentium inferos, aut Colentium, i. e. When we discourse of the Eternity of Souls, the general Consent of all Men either fearing or worshipping the bellish Powers is of very great Moment. And indeed this Belief of the future States being so generally imprinted on Men's Minds is a very probable Argument of the Reality of them, it being hardly conceivable, how the Reason of all Mankind should have so unanimously consented in it,

it, had it not been *extremely* agreeable to the *Make* and *Frame* of our Minds; and we cannot suppose any *false* Proposition to be *agreeable* to the Frame of our Mind, without reflecting *dishonourably* upon the *Truth* of him that framed it. And indeed this Notion of a future State is such as hath been generally embraced by those Persons who are least capable of *deducing* it by a *logical* Dependence of *one* Thing upon *another*; and therefore since it hath no *Dependency* in their Minds on any other *antecedent* Notion, how could it have been so *generally* entertained, did not the *common* Dictate of Nature or Reason, acting alike in all Men, move them to *conspire* in it, though they knew not one another's Minds? For it hath been believed with a kind of *Repugnancy* to *Sense*, which discovers all Things round about it to be *mortal*, and which upon that Account would have been too apt to have seduced *runder* Minds into a Disbelief of any other State, had not some more *powerful* Impression on their Souls *forcibly* urged them to believe it.

But because this Argument drawn from universal Consent is liable to some little Exception, I shall not insist upon it, but endeavour to prove the Reality of this future State of Rewards and Punishments from these Topicks:

First, From the *Wisdom* of God's *Government*.

Secondly, From the *Justice* of his *Providence*.

Thirdly, From the *natural Capacity* of our Souls to survive our Bodies, and to enjoy future Rewards, and suffer future Punishments.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, From the *natural Expectance* we have of future Rewards, and *Dread* of future Punishments.

Fifthly, From the excellent *Frame* and *Structure* of human Nature.

Sixthly, From the *Testimony* of the *Christian Religion*.

I. From the *Wisdom* of God's Government. That *Mankind* is under the Government of God, is evident from that Law which he hath imprinted on our Nature, by which our Actions are distinguished into *Good* and *Evil*, *Virtuous* and *Vicious*; of which sufficient Proof hath been given *Chap. I.* and since God hath given a Law to our Natures, there is no doubt to be made but he hath taken sufficient Care to *enforce* the *Observance* of it by *Rewards* and *Punishments*, otherwise his Government over us would be very *insecure* and *precarious*. For that *Law-giver* doth only *Petition* his Subjects to *obey*, who doth not *promise* such *Rewards* and *denounce* such *Penalties* as are sufficient to oblige them thereunto.

But now there is no *Reward* can be *sufficient* to oblige us to *obey*, which doth not abundantly *compensate* any *Loss* or *Evil* we may *sustain* by our *Obedience*; no *Punishment* sufficient to *deter* us from *disobeying*, that doth not far surmount all the *Benefits* and *Pleasures* which we can hope to reap from our *Disobedience*: But unless there be a *future State*, the Law of Nature can propose no such Rewards and Punishments to us. For if we have nothing to dread or hope for beyond the *Grave*, our present Interest is all our Concern, and in Reason

we ought to judge Things to be *Good* or *Evil*, according as they promote or obstruct our *temporal* Happiness. Now though it is certain that in the general there is a natural Good accruing to us from all virtuous Actions; as on the contrary a natural Evil from all vicious ones; and it is ordinarily more conducive to our temporal Interest to obey than to disobey the Law of our Natures; yet there are a World of Instances wherein Vice may be more advantageous to us than Virtue, abstracting from the Rewards and Punishments of another Life. It is ordinarily better for me to be an honest Man than a Knave; it is more for my Reputation and usually for my Profit too; and it is more for the *Publick Good* in which my own is involved; but yet in several Circumstances it may be better for me with respect only to this World to be a Knave than an honest Man. For whensoever I can cheat so secretly and securely as not to fall under the publick Lash, nor impair my Reputation, and I can gain more by the Cheat than I shall lose in the Damage of the Publick, it will be doubtless more Advantageous for me as to my Worldly Interest to Cheat than to be Honest; and how often such fair Opportunities of Cozenage do Occur, no Man can be Insensible that hath but the least insight into the Affairs of the World. So that if there were no future Rewards and Punishments, this great Law of Righteousness would not have Force enough Universally to oblige us; because there are a World of Instances wherein we might gain more *Good* and eschew more *Evil* by doing *Unrighteously*, than all its present Rewards and Punishments do amount to. And the same may be said of all

all other Laws of Nature, which without the great Motives of *future* Happiness and Misery can no longer induce Men to obey them than it is for their *temporal* Interest to do so. For suppose I can secretly *stab* or *poison* a Man whom I *hate* or *dread*, or from whose Death I may reap any considerable *Advantage*, what should *restrain* me from it? If you say the *Law of Nature*, pray what *Reward* doth the Law of Nature *propose* that is sufficient to *compensate* for the *Dissatisfaction* of my *Revenge*, or for the *Danger* I run in suffering my *Enemy* to *live*; or what *Punishment* doth the Law of Nature denounce that can *ballance* the *Advantage* of a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand Pounds a Year that may *accrue* to me by his Death?

If you say the Law of Nature *proposes* to me the Reward of a *quiet* and *satisfied* Mind, and *denounces* the Punishment of a *guilty* and *amazed* Conscience; I easily answer, that this *Peace* and *Horror*, which is consequent to the *Forbearance* or *Commission* of Sin, arises from the *Hope* and *Dread* of *future* Rewards and Punishments; which being taken away, to *sin* or *not* sin will be *indifferent* as to any *Peace* or *Horror* that can follow upon it; and when *this* Restraint is taken off, what *Consideration* will there be left that is sufficient to withhold me from the *bloody Fact*, whenever I have an Opportunity to act it *securely*, and am *furiously* spurred on to it by my own *Revenge* and *Covetousness*? So that if there be no Rewards and Punishments in *another* Life to *inforce* the Commands of the Law of Nature, it is certain there are no such annexed to it in this as are *universally* sufficient to *oblige* us to observe them. For as for the Goods and

Evils

Evils of this Life, they are ordinarily distributed among Men with so little *Respect* and *Discrimination*, as not only to occasion but to *justify* that famous Observation of the Wise Man, *that all Things happen alike to all*. Either therefore there are other Goods to be hoped for, and other Evils to be feared, or there are a World of Cases wherein God hath not sufficiently provided to secure our obedience to the Law of our Nature; and to imagine that God should give a Law to his Creatures, and take no care to secure the Authority of it, is a most senseless Blasphemy of the Wisdom of his Government; for this would be to expose his own Authority to *Contempt*, and to cast his Laws at the Feet of his Creatures, to be spurned and trampled on by them at their Pleasure.

If it be objected, that all that this Argument proves, is, that to secure our *Obedience* to the Law of Nature, it is necessary we should believe that there are future Rewards and Punishments; but that it doth not hence follow that it is necessary that there should be future Rewards and Punishments; because whether there be any such Things or no, our *Belief* of them will be sufficient to secure the Authority of the Law; I answer, That if our *Belief* of future Rewards and Punishments be necessary, one of these two Things must inevitably follow; either that the Objects of our Belief are real, which is the thing I am proving; or that to countenance the Authority of his Laws it is necessary for God to impose upon our Faith, and deceive us into the belief of *Falshood*. For if to inforce God's Law, it is necessary we should believe that there are future Rewards and Punishments,

either there must *be* such Things *really existing*, or God must inforce his Law with our Belief of a Falshood; and to imagine, that when God *might* have created for us a *future State* of Reward and Punishment, if he had so *pleased*, and governed us by the *Hopes* and *Fears* of it, he hath rather chosen to govern us by *Tricks* and *Lies*, and to *wheedle* us into Obedience by a *Cheat* and *Delusion*, is a Blasphemy no less *senseless* than *horrid*. Since therefore to secure the Authority of that Law by which the human Nature is to be govern'd, it is necessary that it should be *inforced* with the Motives of *everlasting* Reward and Punishment, one of these three Things *necessarily* follows; either that God hath not *sufficiently* inforced his Law, which is a *foul* Imputation on his *Wisdom*, or that he is *feign* to inforce with it a *Lie*, which is an *impious* Reflection on his *Truth*, or that there *are* everlasting Rewards and Punishments.

II. From the *Justice* of the divine *Providence*. For if there be a divine *Providence* presiding over the World (as, that there is, hath been already sufficiently proved) *Justice* and *Equity*, which is the most *glorious* Perfection of an *over-ruling Power*, must necessarily be *included* in the Notion of it. For without *Justice*, over-ruling Power is nothing but an *impotent Tyranny*, which to attribute to God is far more *disconourable* and *incongruous* to the Nature of his Perfections, than to strip him of *all* Providence, as *Epicurus* did, and *shut* him up in the Heavens in a State of everlasting *Sloth* and *Luxury*. For *not* to govern, is only to *do nothing*; but to govern without *Justice*, is to *do Mischief*; and 'tis a much *less* Derogation from

the Perfection of any Being, to suppose it to be *idle* than to suppose it to be *mischievous*. So that allowing that God, who is the most *perfect* of all Beings, *governs* the World, it would not be only *Blasphemous*, but *Nonsense* to imagine that he governs it *unjustly*. Now the proper *Justice* of Government consists in the *Equality* of its *Distributions*; for since there is such a thing as *immutable* Good and Evil in the Actions of *free* and *reasonable* Agents, it is naturally *fit* and *due*, that those who *do* Good should *receive* Good, and those who *do* Evil, Evil, from *their* Hands who have the *Government* of Actions; and this *proportionable* to the *Good* and *Evil* of their Doings. So that God's governing the World *justly*, consists in *distributing* Good to those that do Good, and Evil to those that do Evil, or in other Words, in *proportioning* Rewards and Punishments to Men according to the *Good* and *Evil* he finds in their *Actions*; and unless we suppose him to do this, it is *Nonsense* to imagine that he governs the World.

But if all his Distributions are confined to this Life, and there is neither Reward nor Punishment to be expected from him in *another*, there are *infinite* Instances of his Providence wherein it will be impossible to defend his *Equality* and *Justice*. For if there be no other Scene of *Good* and *Evil*, *Reward* and *Punishment*, but only this Life, all the *afflicted* good and *prosperous* bad Men that ever were in the World, of which there are infinite Instances, are so many *reproachful* Monuments of the woeful Inequality of the divine Government. For how many Millions of *brave* Souls have there been, who have thought nothing too *dear* for God and his Service,

Service, and have *sacrificed* their Lusts, their Lives and their Fortunes to him, and yet upon this Supposal have reaped no other *Recompence* for so doing but only a *miserable* Life, and a *woeful* Death, and an obscure *dishonourable* Grave? As on the contrary, how many Millions of Millions of *wicked* Men that have liv'd in open *Defiance* to all that is sacred, and just, and good, *blasphemed* God, *affronted* his Authority, and *trampled* upon all the Laws of his Government, and yet, supposing there is no other life, have undergone no other *Punishment* for so doing but to live *prosperously*, and die *quietly*, and lie *inshrin'd* in a Marble Monument? Now how can we otherwise *apologize* for the *Justice* of Providence when it thus *cross-couples* Prosperity with Vice, and Adversity with Virtue, but only by supposing this *present* Life to be only the State of our *Trial* and *Probation*, which will quickly *determine* in our *everlasting* *Recompence* or *Punishment*, according as we *behave* and *acquit* ourselves in it; upon which Supposal the *Justice* of Providence may be fairly *accounted for*, were the *present* Distributions of it a thousand times more *unequal* than they are? For then we need not wonder that good and bad Men are at *present* so *unequally* treated, since now they are only upon their *Proof* and *Trial*, which, as I have shewn before, requires *such* a Treatment, but their *Reward* and *Punishment* is reserv'd for *another* State, wherein all these *seeming* Inequalities shall be fairly *adjusted*, and Virtue shall be *crown'd* with *everlasting* *Glory* and *Pleasure*, and Vice *damn'd* to eternal *Horror* and *Confusion*. But if the Goods and Evils of this *present* Life, are all the Reward and Punishment

that good and bad Men are to expect, where is the *Justice* of the divine Government, that many times *oppresses* its Friends, and *advances* its Enemies, and in the Conclusion *extinguishes* their Beings together, and therewith all *Possibility* of making any future *Retribution* of Good to the one, or Evil to the other? And therefore if it be *true*, that the *Judge of all the World will do righteously*, that *first* or *last* he will certainly distribute his Rewards and Punishments to his Subjects according to the *Merit* and *Demerit* of their Actions, it must be as true, that for the *main* he hath *reserved* the doing it to a *future* State; since it cannot be denied but that at *present* he very often doth the quite *contrary*: And if it be but as evident that there is such a future State as it is that God governs the World *justly*, I think 'tis as *fair* an Assurance of it as any *modest* Man can require.

III. From the *natural Capacity* of our Souls to *survive* our Bodies, and *enjoy* future Rewards, and *suffer* future Punishments, it also follows, that there is a future State of Reward and Punishment; for we find in our Souls a certain innate *Force* and *Power*, whereby they *determine* themselves which way they *please* in their *Motions* and *Operations*, whereby they are exempt from the *necessitating* Influence of any thing that is *foreign* to them; and this innate *Liberty* or *Power* of *Self-determination* is necessarily supposed in the Management of all human Affairs; in *Commerce* and *Treaties*, in *Government* and *Laws*, and *Administrations* of *Justice*; in *Councils*, *Admonitions*, *Reproofs* and *Persuasions*; in all which Applications are made to our Souls as to *free* and *self-determining* Agents, that have
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the *absolute* Disposal of their *own* Motions, and can *direct* them which way they *please*; and indeed were not our Souls left to their own *free* Disposal, but *concluded* by the Laws of a *fatal* Necessity, as we see all *material* Agents are, such Applications to them as these, would be very *absurd* and *ridiculous*, and we may as reasonably hope to *tame* Wolves and Tygers by reading *Ethics* to them, or to *still* the North-Wind, by sending *Ambassadors* to him to propose Articles of Peace, as to *prevail* upon Men's Minds by *moral* Addresses and Persuasions; because if they are not *Masters* of their own *Choices*, whatsoever the rigid Laws of *Necessity* determine them to, they must necessarily *chuse* in despite of all *Persuasions* to the contrary.

Now by this *self-determining* Power our Souls do evidently manifest themselves to be *immaterial* Substances, and consequently not liable to *Death* and *Corruption*. For if they were *Matter* they would be moved like Matter, *i. e.* by the *Pressure* or *Thrusting* of other Matter upon them; and it would be no *more* in their Power to move any other way than that which some other Matter *presses* and *impels* them, than it is for a Stone not to move *upwards* when it is *impelled* by the Force which your Arm *impresses* on it, and not to move down again when that Force is *spent*, and it is *press'd back* by its own *Weight* and *Gravity*. Whereas we feel in our Soul an *innate* Power to *determine* itself which way it *pleases*, and even to move quite *contrary* to all *foreign* Impressions. For when 'tis *press'd* on by *outward* objects, to such and such *thoughts* and *purposes* with all imaginable *Vigour*, it often *seems* the impetuous Tide, and *thinks* and *purposes* the

quite *contrary*. How then can that be *Matter* which is not *determined* in its Motions by Matter, but when it *pleases* can either move counter to all material Impressions, or of two material Impressions can move counter to the *strongest*?

That our Souls therefore are *immaterial*, is just as evident as that they have *Liberty of Will*; and that they have Liberty of Will, needs no other Proof than the common *Sense* and *Feeling* of Mankind; and whatsoever Essence *feels* this Freedom *within* it itself, whereby it is absolved from the *rigid* Laws of *Matter*, may with all the Reason in the World conclude itself *immaterial*; and if our Souls are immaterial Substances, to be sure they can *naturally* subsist and live *without* these Bodies, and must *necessarily* do so unless God *destroys* them, as having no *contrary* Qualities or *divisible* Parts, no Principles of *Death* or *Corruption* in them; and since God hath made our Souls of an *immaterial* and *immortal* Nature, we have all the Reason in the World to conclude that he will not *unravel* his own Workmanship, but permit it to *survive* its Body, and *enjoy* or *endure* that *happy* or *miserable* Fate which it self hath *chosen* and *made*.

IV. From the *natural Expectance* we have of future Rewards and *Dread* of future Punishments, it is also evident that there is a State of future Rewards and Punishments. Thus after the Commission of any *flagitious* Wickedness there *naturally* arise *ill Abodings* in Men's Minds of a *dire* After-reckoning; and though the Commission be *secret* and *concealed* from all human Cognizance, so that there is no Reason to *dread* the Corrections
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of *publick Justice* for it, yet whenever the Man *reflects* on it, it fills his Mind with *horrible* *Pre-*
sages of a *woeful* *Futurity*; as, on the contrary, whenever a Man doth any great Good or conquers any *violent* *Temptation* to Evil, it *lifts up* his Soul into a *blessed* *Expectation*, and *swells* his Hope with the *Promise* of 'a future Reward; and tho' the Good he hath *done*, or the Evil he hath *avoided*, gives him no kind of Prospect of any *present* Advantage, yet his Mind is *soothed* and *ravished* with the Contemplation of it, which naturally *suggests* to him the *joyous* Hopes of a *Recompence* to come. For whence should this *Hope* and *Dread* spring up in Men's Minds upon the Commission of *good* and *bad* Actions, but from some *common Impression* upon human Nature, intimating to us a future State of Reward and Punishment; If you say, it is from those *religious* Principles which we *imbibe* in our Education; I would feign know how came this Principle concerning the future State to be so *universally* imbibed, if there were not something in it that is very *agreeable* with the Reason of all Mankind? For, whatever is the Matter, we see it is very *easily* embraced, but very *difficultly* parted with; Men's Minds do *catch* at it with a strange kind of *Greediness*, but when once they have *swallowed* it, it never comes up again without *Straining* and *Violence*; and what should be the Reason of this, if there were not something in it that is very *agreeable* with the natural *Taste* and *Relish* of our *Understandings*? We know there have been great Wits and Philosophers, that have taken as much Pains to *raise* the Belief of a future State out of Men's Minds as ever

any others did to *imprint* it there ; and yet though their Doctrine hath been always highly *befriended* by Men's wicked *Lusts* and *Affections*, to which the Belief of a future State is the most *terrible* and *vexatious* thing in the World, yet with all their *Wit* and *Sophistry* they have never been able to *root it out* of Men's Minds. If then our *Hopes* and *Fears* of another World be *merely* owing to our *Teaching* and *Education*, why should not Teaching *erase* as well as *imprint* them ; especially when it is so *powerfully* seconded with all the *bosom Rhetorick* of Men's *vicious* Inclinations ? Whereas on the contrary, those who have most *industriously* attempted to *extinguish* their Sense of another World, have generally been very *unsuccessful*, and though in the *Riot* of their *sinful* Delights, they many times *charm* and *stupify* it for the present, yet no sooner do they *retire* into themselves, and *cooly* reflect upon their own Minds, but it presently *awakes* again, and *haunts* and *pursues* them ; and though they use all *imaginable* ways to *divert* their Minds from the Thoughts of *another* World, and, to avoid these *bosom-Accusers* and *Tormentors*, run for Sanctuary to all Things *without* them, to *Sports* and *Recreations*, to *Wine* and *Women*, to *Care* and *Business*, yet still they pursue them, and ever and anon break in upon them, and scare and terrify them ; and because their Minds are so *haunted* with these importunate Terrors of the *World to come*, they are afraid to look *inwards*, but are feign to live *abroad* in their own Defence, as not daring to trust themselves *alone* with themselves ; all which are plain *Presages* of a *future* judgment and vengeance that *awaits* wicked Souls
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after this Life. For if this Dread of future Punishment be natural to us (as its sticking so *closely* and *universally* to human Nature plainly argues it is) it must be impressed on us by the great *Author* of Nature; and for him to impress a Passion on us which hath no real Object, would be to impose a *Cheat* upon our Natures, and abuse our Minds with a false Alarm. So that either we must suppose that God hath implanted in our Natures a *Dread* of that which is *not*, which is a *dishonourable* Reflection on his *Truth* and *Veracity*; or that there is really a future Punishment answerable to that Dread.

And as the *Dread* of future Punishment is natural to us when we do *ill*, so the *Desire* and *Expectance* of future Reward is no less natural to us when we do *well*. For I dare boldly say, there never was any virtuous Man, of whatsoever *Nation* or *Religion*, or *Seēt of Philosophers*, whose Mind hath not been winged with earnest Hopes and Desires of a *future* Happiness; and there is none that ever yet either *denied* or *despaired* of it, but only such as have first *debauched* the very Principles of their Nature. For such it is evident were the *Saducees* and *Epicureans*, Sects of Men that had *drown-ed* all that was *human* in them in *Sensuality* and *Voluptuousness*, and are *branded* upon Record for their shameful Indulgence to their own *brutish* Genius; and such are no *Standards* of human Nature, but ought rather to be looked upon as *Monsters* of Men. And therefore as we do not judge of the natural *Figures* and *Proportions* of human Bodies by *monstrous* and *mishapen* Births, so neither ought we to judge of what is *natural* or *unnatural*, to Men by those *Brutes* in *human Shape*, who by submit-
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ing their *Reason* to their *Passions* and *Appetites*, have *disfigured* their *Natures* and *distorted* it into an unnatural Position : But if we would know what is *human* and *natural* to us, we must take our Measures from those who live most *conformably* to the *Laws* of a *rational Nature* ; and these are they whom we call *Pious* and *Virtuous*, who are therefore to be looked upon as the *true* Standards of *human Nature*, by whom we may best judge of what is *natural* and *unnatural* to us ; and if we judge by *these*, we shall most certainly find that *Virtue*, and the *Hopes* of *Immortality* are so nearly allied, that like *Hippocrates's* Twins they live and die together. For though while Men live a *brutish* and *sensual* Life, their *future Hopes* are usually *drowned* in their *present* Enjoyments ; yet when once they recover out of this *unnatural* State, and begin to live like *reasonable* Beings, immediately they feel great *Desires* and *Expectations* of a future Happiness *springing up* in their Minds, and so *arising* higher and higher proportionably as they *advance* in *Virtue* and *Goodness* ; which is a plain Evidence that these *Hopes* and *Desires* are *natural* to us and *interwoven* with the *Frame* and *Constitution* of our Souls. But now how can it consist with the *Goodness* of God to *implant* such *Desires* and *Hopes* in our *Natures*, and then *withhold* from them that which is the only Object that can *suit* and *satisfy* them ? For as a great Divine of our own hath well observed, *Other* Beings we see have no *natural* Desire in *vain*, the good God having so ordered Things that there are *Objects* in Nature *apportioned* to all their *natural Appetites* ; but if there be no *future* State of Happiness reserv-

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ed for good Men, we are by a natural Principle most strongly inclined to that which we can never attain to ; as if God had purposely framed us with such *Inclinations*, that so we might be perpetually *Tormented* between those two Passions *Desire* and *Despair*, an earnest Propension after a future Happiness, and an utter Incapacity of enjoying it ; as if Nature itself, whereby all other Things are disposed to their *Perfection*, did serve only in *Man* to make him *miserable*, and, which is more considerable, as if *Virtue*, which is the Perfection of *Nature*, did only serve to contribute to our *Infelicity*, by raising in us such Desires and Expectations as without a future Happiness must be for ever disappointed. But if this Desire and Expectation be natural to us, as it evidently is, it must be implanted there by the *God of Nature*, with whose *Truth* and *Goodness* it can never consist to inspire us with such *Desires* and *Hopes* as he knows have no Object in the Nature of Things, and so can never be fulfilled and accomplished.

V. From the excellent Frame and Constitution of human Nature, it is also evident that there is a future State of Reward and Punishment. For whoever shall impartially consider the Frame of our Natures, will easily discern that we are made for much greater Purposes than to enjoy this World, and that our Faculties are as much too big for these sensitive Fruitions as the Channel of the Ocean is for the Streams of a little River. For the highest Happiness we can frame an Idea of, is the enjoyment of God by Contemplation and Love, and an imitation of his Perfections, as I have prov'd at large, *Part I, c. 3.* Which doth as far excel all
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worldly Happiness, as the Enjoyments of a Prince do the Pleasures of a *Fly*; and yet it is evident that our Minds are framed with a natural capacity of enjoying this supreme Beatitude, *i. e.* of contemplating, and loving and imitating God. For as for the *Being* and *Existence* of God, all Things round about us preach and proclaim it, and which way soever we turn our Eyes we behold the Footsteps of his *Power* and *Wisdom*; and being endowed with a reasoning Faculty, we can easily ascend to the infinite Perfections of his Nature by those borrowed Perfections we behold in his Creatures, which are so many lively Comments and Paraphrases upon him, and so far forth as they are Perfections, must necessarily meet and center in him; and then such is the frame of our Natures, that from the Contemplation of the Beauty and Perfection of any Being, we naturally proceed to *Admire* and *Love* it; so that unless our *Wills* be violently *prejudiced* against the *Perfections* of God, our Contemplation must necessarily kindle our *Love* of them; and then those Perfections which we *Love* and *Admire* in another, we are naturally ambitious to transcribe into our selves; so that being once inflamed with the Love of God, that will be continually prompting us to imitate him, and that will by Degrees mould us into a fair and glorious resemblance of him. Thus God hath implanted in the very frame of our Nature a most forward Capacity of enjoying himself, which in the Perfection of it infinitely transcends all that can be imagined in a terrestrial Paradise. And yet though we have Faculties that we are sure are naturally capable of enjoying him to *Perfection*;

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of contemplating him without *Weariness*, of loving him without *Aversion*, of imitating him without *Difficulty* or *Interruption*; in this present State of Things it is morally impossible we should ever arise to it. For our Faculties are clogged with so many sinful Prejudices, interrupted with so many bodily Necessities, diverted with so many secular Occasions, that it cannot be reasonably expected even from the best Men in the World, that they should in this Life approach the *Perfection* of the *Happiness* of *divine Enjoyment*; especially if there were no other Life but this, for then it would be *Folly* so much as to *attempt* it. For what Man in his *Wits* would ever think it worth the while to spend a considerable Part of his Life in *waging War* with himself, *mortifying* his Affections, *crossing* and *starving* out his dearest Inclinations (which yet he must do e'er he can arrive to any *comfortable Degree* of *divine Enjoyment*) if there were no other Recompence to be expected at last, but to live a few Days longer in a *rapturous Muse*, and then lie down in everlasting *Darkness* and *Insensibility*? Had he not a thousand times better *please* and *gratify* himself at present, *content* his craving *Desires* with the Goods that are before him, and take his *fill* of those sensual *Delights* that readily offer themselves to his Enjoyment, than run away from them in a long and wearisome *Quest* of *spiritual Joys*, which for all he knows he may never *arrive to*, or if he doth, is sure within a few Moments to be deprived of for ever. So that if there be no other State but this, it is plain we are made naturally capable of the highest Happiness to no Purpose; we are naturally

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capable of enjoying God, and yet such are our Circumstances in this present State, that if there be no other, it is not to be expected we should ever arrive to any high degree of Enjoyment; and if it were, all things considered, it would be an egregious piece of Folly to attempt it. Now how can it consist, either with the divine *Wisdom* or *Goodness*, to create in us such vast Capacities of spiritual Happiness, and then place us in such Circumstances wherein it would be both Imprudent and in Vain for us to pursue any other Happiness but what is *Carnal* and *Sensual*? No wise Man would build a House unless he meant it should be inhabited; and can we imagine that the *All-wise* God would ever have created in us such vast and boundless Capacities of Happiness, merely to stand empty and be for ever uninhabited; that he who always proposes to himself the most noble and worthy ends of his Actions, would ever have formed in us such superfluous Capacities; or built such spacious Rooms in our Nature when he never intended to make any Use of them?

And then, considering the *Goodness* as well as *Wisdom* of God, what *likelihood* is there that he should create such ample Capacities in our Nature, and furnish it with such excellent Faculties, for no other end but to enjoy the trifling Goods of this Life; that he who hath created Goods for all other Creatures, that are every way adequate to their natural Capacities, should make us capable to partake of the Felicities of Angels, and then stake us down to the Pleasures of Swine? Especially considering that by making us capable of a higher Happiness and sensible of our own Capacity, he hath almost

most necessitated us to expect and desire it; and what is this, if he doth not intend it for us, but to create in us an *Appetite* merely to vex and *tantalise* it; as if it were a *Recreation* to him to sit above in the Heavens and behold the Work of his own Hands spending itself in weary Struglings towards him, and vexed all the while it continues in Being with an *impotent* Desire of that which it shall never enjoy, and which by giving it a *Capacity* to enjoy, he hath encouraged it to *desire* and *expect*?

VI. And lastly, from the *Testimony* of the *Christian Religion* it is also evident that there is a future State of Reward and Punishment; which in most express Terms assures us of another Life beyond this, wherein we shall be for ever *happy* or *miserable* according to what we have *done in the Flesh*; so that we have as full evidence of the Reality of future Rewards and Punishments, as we have of the Truth of Christianity, and as full evidence of the Truth of Christianity as all the miraculous Works of our Saviour can give, and as full evidence of the Truth of his Miracles as the most credible *Testimony* of *Eye Witnesses* can give, who not only confirmed their *Testimony* by other Miracles of their own, but at last sealed it with their Blood, which is the highest Security that mortal Men can give of their Fidelity; but tho' this Argument be of all others the most *convincing* and *satisfactory*, yet I shall insist no farther on it in this Place, because I shall have occasion to prosecute it at large in the seventh Chapter.

S E C T. III.

By what means this Belief of divine Rewards and Punishments is to be begotten and confirmed in us.

THough the Evidences of future Rewards and Punishments be such as are sufficient to Convince any reasonable Mind, yet it is evident that in this degenerate State of our Natures there is a strong Repugnancy to the lively Belief of them, insomuch that the bare proposal of Evidence is not sufficient effectually to persuade us; wherefore before we dismiss this Argument, it will be necessary to add, to what hath been said, such *Means* and *Directions*, as, together with the *Evidences*, are proper to dispose our Minds to the effectual Belief of the future State; and these I shall reduce to these four Particulars:

I. If we would effectually believe the future State of Rewards and Punishments, we must fix and inure our Minds to serious Thoughts and Considerations. For whilst our Minds are taken up with *Fancies* and *Levities*, with *wild* or *ludicrous* or *incoherent* Ideas, or entertained with the *Cares* or *Pleasures* of this Life, they will not be at leisure to turn their Thoughts towards another World. For to think close of another World requires a very serious and thoughtful Mind; because the other World doth not press upon our Senses as this World doth, which wheresoever we turn our selves is continually thrusting its Objects
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into our Minds through our *Eyes* and *Ears*, and whispering to our Thoughts through the Organ of our Senses which are the most immediate Entries and Inlets to our Mind. So that the other World being quite out of sight, and this always in view, it is as difficult for us to keep the one out of our Minds as to let the other in. For before we can set ourselves to think *closely* of the other World, we must shut our Eyes and Ears to the Objects of this; otherwise they will *obtrude* themselves upon us, and *draw* away our Thoughts and Meditations; we must gather in our Thoughts from the Objects of Sense that are round about us, take leave of this World, and retire into our own Minds, and shut up ourselves within our selves, that none of these sensitive Things may come at us, and that we may be wholly at leisure to entertain ourselves with the invisible Things of another World. And this we shall never be able to do so long as our Minds are *vain* and *roving*, and *desultory*, and possess'd with *wild* Imaginations, or *restless* Cares, or *extravagant* Mirth and Jollities; for these Things will put our Thoughts upon so many *Vagaries*, and render them so *loose* and *wild*, and *incoherent*, that they will never be able to hang long enough together to form any serious Conceptions. So that when we would fix them upon the other World we shall scarce be able to gather them in from those outward Objects among which they are squandered; or if we do, we shall never keep them long enough together to form any serious Apprehension of it; but as soon as they have taken a cursory View of it, they will be flying abroad again, and roving into Vanity and Impertinence. So that while our Minds are

Light and Vain, they cannot think enough of another World seriously to apprehend and believe it; the Rewards and Punishments of that invifible State are things too ferious for our wild thoughts to dwell on; and till our Minds are grown more fixed and fteady, till they are more withdrawn from fenfitive Objects, and more accuftomed to retired Thinking, they will be too volatile and fugitive feriously to apprehend, and heartily to believe a future State. If therefore we would attain to a firm Belief of it, we muft endeavour to reclaim our wild Thoughts by accuftoming our felves to *ferious Thinking*; and when by fad and ferious Meditations we have rendered our Minds more fixed and retired, we muft

II. Endeavour to remove thofe vicious Prejudices which indifpofe us to the belief of future Rewards and Punishments. For while Men live in Oppofition to God, and have therefore Reason to apprehend his Difpleafure, this will ftrongly prejudice our Minds againft the belief of a future State, becaufe this Belief muft neceffarily gall and difturb us, and render our vicious Courfes extremely troublefome and uneasy. For when a Man is refolved to lead an ill Courfe of Life, and at the fame time believes it will conclude in eternal Wretchednefs, his Faith will be a perpetual plague to his Mind, like *Beltefhazzar's Mene Tekel*, it will fcare and alarm him in his finful Caroufes, and imbitter the guft of them with many a fad Thought and dire Reflection; and till he either shakes Hands with his Creed, or his Ill-Refolution, it will be impoffible for him ever to be quiet. Whilft therefore he refolves to continue his ill Courfes, it is his

his Interest to believe there is no other World but this ; he is obliged to it in his *own Defence*, and as he hopes to enjoy *himself*, and *Sin* without *Disturbance* ; and then his Interest having bribed his *Affection*, his Affection will be sure so to bias his *Reason*, that it will be a difficult matter for him to convince and persuade himself. For if there be future *Rewards*, he knows he hath no Interest in them ; if future *Punishments*, he is conscious he must feel and endure them ; and to believe that there are such Goods as he shall never be the better for, and such Evils as he shall be infinitely the worse for, must needs be extremely repugnant to his Inclinations. For that which Men would not have, they are averse to believe ; and that which they are averse to believe they are not easily convinced of, because their Aversion will cast such a Mist before their Minds as that they will hardly be able to discern a fair Probability in a clear *Demonstration*. Wherefore, if ever you would arrive at a firm Belief of the future Rewards and Punishments, you must endeavour to dispel from your Minds those Prejudices against it with which your own ill Courses are apt to inspire you, by resolving to lay aside your sinful Affections and Interests while you are examining the evidences of another World, and not to suffer them to intermingle with your Reasonings ; concluding, that in a matter of such infinite Moment, it is the greatest madness in the World to Think as you Wish, and Believe as you Affect ; that it is not your Unbelief will either extinguish the Joys of Heaven, or quench the Flames of Hell, and that since the nature of Things will not bend to your Wishes, and be as you would have them,

it is your true Interest to believe that they are what they are, especially in a matter of such infinite Concern to you; that if Heaven and Hell are not *Dreams* but *Realities*, you will most certainly find them so whatever they think of them, and that therefore it concerns you as much as an eternity of Happiness or Misery *amounts to*, to *believe* that they are *real* if they are so, lest out of a vain *Confidence* that there are *no such Things*, you *forfeit* Heaven and *incur* Hell Fire. With such Thoughts as these you must often *encounter* those *Prejudices* which *Sin* raises in your Minds; and when once you have *conquered* them, and *reduced* your Minds to an impartial Desire of being *rightly informed* in this Matter, and in order to that, to give an *equal bearing* to the Reasons on both Sides, you are fairly *prepared* for the *Belief* of another World, which cannot fail to obtain your Understandings, if

III. You *duly* examine those *Motives* of *Credibility* upon which those future Rewards and Punishments are *proposed*. For though *Faith be the Gift of God*, yet it is a *Gift* which he *confers* upon us as he doth all his other Blessings, in the use of *due* and *proper* Means; and as it is *the blessing of the Lord that makes Rich*, but not without the concurrence of the *diligent Hand*, so it is the *grace* of God that gives us *Faith*, but not without our Application to the *natural* Means. Now the natural means of Faith is a *due Consideration* of the *Evidence* upon which the matter to be *believed* is *founded* and *proposed*. For though the matter be never so evident in itself, yet it is not evident to us, 'till we have *duly considered* it; and if we *Believe* without *Evidence*, we Believe with our *Will*, and

and not with our *Understandings*; whereas in *reality* believing is properly an act of the *Understanding*, whereby it *assents* to a thing as *true*, which it cannot do without some *Proof* and *Evidence* that it is so; and therefore when we assent to Things as true with our *Wills* without our *Understandings*, or, which is the same Thing, without *Proof* and *Evidence*, we cannot so properly be said to *Believe*, as not to *Disbelieve* them. For there are a World of Things which Men do neither *deny* nor *affirm*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, that is, about which they never *concern* their Thoughts, nor *trouble* their Heads one way or t'other. And thus it is here; there are many who *pretend* to *believe* another World, but if you ask them *why*, they can give no *Reason*, nor did they ever *enquire* whether there be *any* to be *given*: so that it is plain whatever they *imagine*, they do not *believe* it; for to *Believe* without *Understanding*, is as perfect Nonsense, as to *Understand* without *Evidence*, or *Believe* without *Faith*. So that *that* which they call *Faith*, is only *not Disbelieving*; whether there be another World or no, they never troubled their Heads to *enquire*, and so having no *Evidence pro* or *con*, their *Understanding* doth neither *affirm* nor *deny*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, but negligently leaves the matter in *suspense* and *uncertainty*.

The natural *means* of Faith therefore you see, is a due *enquiry* into the *evidence* of the *truth* and *reality* of the Things we *Believe*; and therefore if we would indeed *Believe* that there is a future World of Rewards and Punishments, we must seriously consider the *Reasons* and *Evidences* that *prove* and *assert* it, and *urge* them, *close* to our Un-

derstandings, till they have forced and extorted from them a rational and well grounded assent; which if we do, laying aside all Partiality and Prejudice, there is no doubt but they will be found weighty enough to turn the Scale against all Objections to the contrary; especially if

IV. and lastly, you add to all these Means fervent and hearty Prayer. For Prayer in itself is a very proper and useful Means to beget and confirm in us the Belief of the other World, because it is an abstraction of the Mind from those sensitive and material Objects which stand like Hills and Mountains between us and the invisible World, and intercept our Prospect of it. For whenever our Mind is engaged in a serious and hearty Prayer, it dispels all earthly Things before it, and scatters them out of Sight, and having no *Mists* or *Clouds* in its way, nothing but a fair and clear Heaven above it, thither it directs its *Eyes* and *Thoughts*, and *Desires* without any Lett or Interruption. Now the very withdrawing our Minds from sensible Things to converse with Spiritual and Invisible ones, doth, as I shewed you before, mightily dispose to the Belief of another World. When therefore by frequent and hearty Prayer our Minds have been accusom'd to retire from the objects of Sense, and to fix their Thoughts and Contemplations upon God, they will be able to turn themselves with more ease and readiness to the invisible Things of another World, which the more familiar they are to us, the better able we shall be to apprehend and believe them.

But then, by our fervent and hearty Prayers we shall also obtain the Assistance of God, without the concurrence of whose *Grace* we can do no good Thing,

Thing, and much less *effectually* believe the Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which is the Root and Principle of all true Piety and Virtue. For to the forming of a firm Belief of this Doctrine in our Minds, there is required a very *severe* and *impartial* Consideration of the *Proofs* and *Evidences* upon which it is *founded*; and considering how *vain* and *roving* our Thoughts are, how apt to fly off from any serious Argument, and especially from this of another World, which is so *offensive* to our vicious *Appetites* and *Affections*, what likelihood is there that we should ever fix our Minds to such a thorough Examination of the Proofs of another World as is necessary to beget in us a lively Belief of it, unless God, who alone can command our Thoughts co-operates with us, and animates our faint Endeavours with his *Grace* and *Assistance*; unless he by suggesting the Evidences of the future State to us, and by urging and repeating them, imprints them on our Minds with all their natural Force and Efficacy; in a Word, unless by following our flying Thoughts with these his holy Inspirations, and importuning them with, and almost forcing them upon them, he at last prevails with them to stay and look back and consider and seriously to ponder the weight and force of them, it is very improbable they should ever abide long enough upon our Minds to settle into a firm and efficacious Belief. Let us therefore earnestly implore the *Aid* and *Assistance* of God, and beseech him frequently to inspire our Minds with the Arguments of a future Life, and to urge, and repeat and set them home upon our Thoughts, till by a due Consideration of them we have extracted all their *Force* and

Evidence, and digested it into a lively and active Belief; and if to the use of all the above-named Means you do but add this of *Prayer* and *Supplication*, you may depend upon it, that he who hath promised to open unto all that knock, and to be found of all that seek him, will never deny you any *Grace* or *Assistance* that is necessary to produce in you the *fundamental* Principle of Religion, viz. an *effectual* Belief of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another World.

To conclude this Argument therefore, since *this* Belief is so absolutely necessary to *subject* our Minds to the *obligations* of Religion, let us endeavour as much as in us lies, to *found* it in our *Reason*, by *convincing* our Minds of the *truth* and *force* of our *Evidences* upon which it is *proposed*. For while we *Believe* upon *Trust* and we know not *why*, our Faith must needs be very *weak* and *infirm*, and like a Tree without Root in the midst of a Storm, be unable to *outstand* any *blast* of Temptation. For the temptations of *Sin* are such *Goods* and *Evils* as are evident to our *Senses*, which do most certainly assure us that there are such Things in the World as *Pleasure* and *Profit*, *Reproach* and *Persecution*; and therefore unless when we are *Tempted*, our *Faith* can confront the evidence of *Sense*, with the Evidence of *Reason*, and produce good Proof of those future Goods and Evils which it puts in the Ballance against these present Temptations, it will hardly be able to withstand them. For what likelihood is there that the Things which we *Believe* without *Proof* and *Evidence*, should have comparably that Force and Influence upon us, as the Things which we *know*, and *feel* and *experience*? So that when we come to oppose a Heaven
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and a Hell, of whose *Reality* and *Existence* we have no Evidence, to *Pleasures* or *Profits*, *Reproaches* or *Persecutions*, which strike immediately on our *Senses*, it is easy to *prognosticate* which will be most prevalent.

But if our *Belief* of the future Rewards and Punishments be founded on such *Evidence* as satisfies our *Reason*, what Temptation in the World is there that can prevail against it; what *Good* is there that can outbid Heaven, or what *Evil* that can vie Terrors with Hell? For we see by Experience, that the Objects of our *Faith*, when it is grounded upon *satisfactory* Evidence, do as much influence our Minds as the Objects of *Sense*; they who never saw the *Indies*, unless it were in a *Map*, and so can hardly believe that there are such Countries, are yet as much affected with the rich Merchandise they abound with, as those who have been *there*, and as ready to venture their *Estates* and *Persons* thither, through the *Danger of the Sea*, in Hope of a *prosperous* Return. If therefore we believe that there is such a *State* as *Heaven*, with as full Satisfaction of Mind as we do that there is such a *Place* as the *Indies*, doubtless our *Faith* would affect us as much as our *Eyes*, and we should be as *forward* to go to Heaven, and venture through all Dangers and Difficulties thither, as if we had been there *already*, and had *seen* with our own Eyes all the *Glories* and *Delights* it *flows* and *abounds* with. So that the Evidence of our *Faith*, if it be *clear* and *satisfactory*, will as much *affect* our Minds as the Evidence of our *Sense*; and *Heaven* and *Hell* will as *vigorously* influence our *Hope* and *Fear*, if with a full

full Satisfaction of Mind we believe them, as if we had seen and felt them. Conceive then that you had spent but *one Hour* in *Heaven*, surveying with your own Eyes the *Glories* of that *Place*, the *Triumphs* and *Exaltations* of its blessed *Inhabitants*, and the *rapturous Joys* and *Delights* wherewith it *entertains* them; conceive, that after this you have been sent for *another Hour* in *Hell*, and had there been *Spectators* of *Horrors* and *Agonies* of the Damned, or their *Torture*, and *Rage*, and *dire Convulsions* of *Soul*, caused by a *desperate* and *remediless* Misery; in a Word, conceive, that after all, you had been dismissed into this World again to *chuse* your own Fate, and *determine* yourselves to that happy or this miserable Portion for ever; think now what your *Mind* and *Resolution* would be; whether you would not be willing to lose any thing rather than *Heaven*, or to endure any thing rather than *Hell*; whether any Good or Evil Sin can *tempt* you withal, would be able to *out-tempt* the Rewards and Punishments of Eternity. Doubtless no; the *Remembrance* you would have of the *infinite Joys* and *intolerable Miseries* you saw in that other World, would prove an invincible Antidote against all Temptation. Now what your *Sense* of the other World would be if you had *seen* it, that will your Belief of it be, when 'tis founded upon clear and satisfactory Evidence; 'twill be an *infallible Counter-charm* against the most *bewitching* Temptations; 'twill render the greatest Goods dreadful to us that *beckon* us to Hell, and the greatest Evils desirable that *drive* us towards Heaven. For *Faith*, saith the Apostle, *is the Substance of Things hoped for,*
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and the Evidence of Things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. that is, it renders its *invisible* Objects as *real* and *evident* to us, as our *Sense* doth *visible* ones; and when Heaven and Hell are become as *evident* to our *Faith* as sensible Things are to our *Senses*, what Good or Evil is there in all the World that can *out-tempt* 'em? For what *Good* is there so *good* as Heaven, or what *Evil* so *bad* as Hell? So that if our *Belief* of the future Rewards and Punishments be but *founded* on such *Evidence* as gives a full Satisfaction to our Minds, 'twill draw our Souls to God like an *invincible* Loadstone, in despite of all the *Oppositions* of Temptations from *without*, and of all the *Counter-strivings* of a corrupt Nature from *within*; and there is nothing in the World will be able to *withstand* it; no *Good* or *Evil* that Sin can promise or threaten that will have Power to resist its *Almighty* Persuasions, but 'twill force its own way through all *Oppositions*, and like an *overflowing* Torrent bear down all our carnal Considerations before it.

Wherefore, if ever we mean to *disengage* ourselves from the *Slavery* of Sin, and entirely to devote ourselves to God and his Service, let us in the Use of the above-named Means endeavour to establish our Minds in a firm and well-grounded belief of the other World; that so our *Faith* being built upon a sure Foundation of *Reason*, may be able to outstand all the *Waves* of Temptation, and to chase all those Goods and Evils before it that stand in the way of our Return to God; and when by our *Faith* we have so far overcome the *World* as to submit and resign ourselves to God, in Despite of all its Temptations, we shall find our
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Belief of the other World every Day grow and improve upon our Hands, 'till at last it commences into a certain Assurance. For 'tis not so much Men's *Reason* as their *Lusts* that do object against the Reality of the future World; they are loth to believe it, because it *disturbs* them in their *sinful* Enjoyments, and so their *Will* employs their *Reason* to *argue* against it; and when once their *Wills* are engaged in the *Controversy*, a very *slender* probability will weigh more on that side than a *clear* Demonstration on the other. When therefore our *Wills* are *taken off* by a free Resignation of them to God, all that sinful *Prejudice* which renders us *now* so *averse* to believe, will vanish from our Minds; and then we shall see Things as they are, and the *Arguments* of another World will appear to our Minds with such a *convincing* Evidence, as will quickly *dispel* all our *doubts* and *uncertainties*, and render our *Faith* equivalent to a clear *Vision*. So that we shall pass through all the Temptations of the World with the same *Constancy* and *Resolution* of Soul, as if we walk'd in *open View* of Heaven and Hell, and these mighty Objects which do so infinitely transcend all the Goods and Evils which Sin can *tempt* us withal, will have as *victorious* an Influence on our Lives as if they were *present*, and did strike *immediately* on our Senses. And then how is it possible that any Temptation whatsoever should be able to cope *with* or prevail *against* them? For he who is fully persuaded of the Reality of Heaven and Hell, must be utterly abandon'd of all his *Reason*, if he sin for any *Goods* sake that is *less* than Heaven, or for any *Evils* sake that is *less* than Hell. When therefore we
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are drawn to God by such *invincible* Hopes and Fears as the *firm* Belief of the other World will *suggest* to us, how is it possible that any Temptation of Sin should either *dissuade* us from *coming* to him, or *persuade* us to *forsake* him? Wherefore it concerns us to take all possible Care to ground our Faith well, and improve and strengthen it, that so in Despight of all Temptations it may influence our *Wills* and govern our *Practice*, and safely conduct us through all the *Snares* of this Life, and at length bring us *home* to everlasting Happiness.

C H A P.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Necessity of having right Apprehensions of God, in order to our being truly religious.

IT is a noble and celebrated Passage of *Epic-
tetus*, Ch. 38. Τῆς περὶ τὰς θεὰς εὐσεβείας ἴσθι.
ὅτι τὸ κυριώτατον ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν, ὁρθὰς ὑπολήψει περὶ αὐ-
τῶν ἔχειν ὡς ὄντων καὶ διοικούντων τὰ ὅλα καλῶς καὶ δικαίως,
i. e. Know that the main Foundation of Piety is this,
to have right Apprehensions of the Nature of God, and
to be sensible that he is, and that he governs the World
well and justly ; and accordingly the Psalmist speak-
ing of God, tells us, They that know thy Name will
put their Trust in thee, Psal. ix, 10. i. e. They who
have made a true Discovery of thy Nature, and by ob-
serving, as I have done, the glorious Effects of thy
Wisdom, and Power, and Justice, and Goodness, have
formed in their Minds right and genuine Appre-
hensions concerning thee, will make no Scruple to
place their whole Trust and Confidence in thee ; which
is equally true of all other Acts of Piety and Reli-
gion. For the true Knowledge of God will as
much influence our Minds to love and adore him,
to praise him and submit to him, as to put our
Trust in him ; and hence St. Paul ascribes all the
Impiety and Wickedness of the Gentiles to their
not liking to retain God in their Knowledge, i. e.
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to their wicked *Aversion* to the *true* and *genuine* Notions of God, *Rom. i. 28.*

In the Prosecution of this Argument I shall endeavour these three Things:

First, To shew in what *Respects* right Apprehensions of God are *necessary* to our being *truly Religious*.

Secondly, To lay down some *Rules* for the *forming* of right Apprehensions of God in our Minds.

Thirdly, To *assign* and *remove* the common Causes of our *Misapprehensions* concerning him.

S E C T. I.

In what Respects right Apprehensions of God are necessary to our being truly Religious.

I N general, whatsoever is requisite to render Men *truly Religious* must be derived from true Apprehensions of God, who is the great *Object* of Religion. For *Religion* being the *Rule* of divine Service must itself be regulated by the divine *Nature*, and without a right Understanding of the Nature of God, it is impossible we should regulate our Religion by it. Now to the right Conduct and due Regulation of our Religion, it is requisite, first, that we should be rightly informed what *Services* are pleasing to God; secondly, that we proceed upon a true Principle in serving him; thirdly, that we direct our Service to a right End;

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fourthly,

fourthly, that we be *furnished* with sufficient *Motives* to engage us to serve him ; the want of either of which will prove an *irreparable* Flaw in the very *Foundation* of our Religion, and render the Whole not only *infirm* but *defective* in its very Constitution. And in all these Respects, *right Apprehensions* of God are *indispensably* necessary.

First, they are necessary to *inspire* us with what *Services* are *pleasing* to God.

Secondly, They are necessary to *inform* us with the true *Principle* upon which we must serve him.

Thirdly, they are necessary to *direct* us to the true *End* for which we must serve him.

Fourthly, They are necessary to furnish us with proper *Motives* and *Encouragements* to engage us to serve him.

I. A *right Apprehension* of God is necessary to *instruct* us what *Services* are *pleasing* to God. For to be sure nothing can be pleasing to him but what is agreeable to the *Perfections* of his *Nature*, which are the *Originals* from whence the *eternal* Laws of Religion are *transcribed*; unless therefore we know what his *Perfections* are, how is it possible we should know what *Services* are agreeable to them ? If you would serve a Prince *gratefully* and *acceptably*, you must inform yourself before-hand what his *Nature* and *Disposition* is, that so you may *accommodate* yourself thereunto, and *compose* your Actions and Behaviour accordingly ; that you may *furnish* him with *fresh* Pleasures if he be *soft* and *voluptuous*, and blow him up with *Flatteries* if he
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be *proud* and *vain-glorious*; that if he be *Covetous* and *Tyrannical*; you may *sponge* and *oppress* his People, and *drain* their *Wealth* into his *Coffers*; if *Just* and *Beneficent*, you may *assist* and *forward* him in *righting* the *Injuries*, *correcting* the *Miscarriages*, and *alleviating* the *Burthens* of his *Subjects*. And thus if you would *serve* the great King of the World in such ways as are *pleasing* and *acceptable* to him, you must study his *Nature*, and endeavour to inform yourselves which way his infinite Perfections do incline him, that so you may know how to comport yourself towards him and to render him such Services as are agreeable to his Nature. For there is no rule in the World but only that of his *Nature*, by which you can certainly conclude what will please him; and though he hath told you by exprefs Revelation what Services he expects, and what will please him, yet without recurring to the *rule* of his *Nature*, you can never be secure either that what he told you is true, or that what he told you was pleasing to him then, is still pleasing to him now. For how can you be secure either that he told you truly what Services were pleasing to him, but only from the *truth* and *veracity* of his *Nature*, or that the Services which were pleasing to him then, are pleasing to him now, but from the *Stability* and *Unchangeableness* of his Nature. So that in our *Enquiries* after what is pleasing to God, we cannot depend upon his *Word*, without consulting his *Nature*, which is not only the *Security* but also the *Test* of his Word. For it is certain that *that* cannot be God's *Word* which *contradicts* his *Nature*, and what *plausible* Pretence soever any Doctrine may make

to *divine Revelation*, if it teach or command any thing that is apparently *repugnant* to the *divine Perfections*, we ought for that Reason to conclude it an *Imposture*; it being much more possible that the most plausible Pretence to *Revelation* should be *false*, than that God should *reveal* any Doctrine that is *repugnant* to his *Nature*. So that in all our Inquiries what is pleasing to God, our last *Appeal* must be to his *Nature*, which is the great *Standard* of *Good* and *Evil*, by which we are to *measure* what is pleasing and displeasing to him.

Whilst therefore we are ignorant of God's Nature, or possessed with *wrong* and *false* Apprehensions of it, we must necessarily wander in the *Dark*, and neither know what to do nor how to behave ourselves towards him. For how can we imagine what will please or displease a dark and unknown Nature, whose *Bent* and *Inclinations* we are utterly *unacquainted* with; but if we are under *false* Apprehensions of his Nature, they must necessarily mislead us in our *Behaviour* towards him, and put us upon *false* Ways of serving and pleasing him. Thus if we apprehend him to be a *froward* and *testy* Being, that is apt to be *pleased* and *displeased* with *Trifles*, in *Conformity* to our Apprehension of his Nature, we shall offer him a trifling Service. A Service made up of *Pageantry* and *Complement*, of *Pompous* Shew and *ceremonious* Respects and *empty* Formalities; for such a trifling Worship is in itself most *proper* for such a *humorous* Divinity. So if we apprehend him to be of an *imperious* and *tyrannical* Nature, that governs himself and the World by a blind and obstinate Will, without any regard to the *eternal Reasons* of Things,

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we shall worship him as the *Indians* do their arbitrary Devils, *i. e.* follow him with *Howlings* and *Lamentations*, with *trembling* Hearts and *frighted* Looks, and *dismal* Tones, and by *flattering* him with *Praises*, and *sawning* upon him with *flavish* Submissions and Addresses, endeavour to *collogue* with Heaven, and *ingratiate* ourselves with its dreadful Majesty ; for what can be more agreeable to such a *tyrannical* Divinity than such a *forc'd* and *flavish* Worship ? In a Word, if we apprehend him to be a *fond* and *indulgent* Being, that is governed by a *foolish* Pity and *blind* Commiseration, we shall not fail to render him a suitable Worship, *i. e.* to retire and grow *melancholy*, to *whine* and *bemoan* ourselves ; to *deject* our Looks and *disfigure* our Countenances, and *tease* our Souls into Fits of fruitless Compunction, that so by the soft Rhetorick of a well-acted Sorrow we may pierce his Bowels and melt him into *Pity* and *Compassion* towards us ; for what can be more prevalent with such a soft and indulgent Deity, than such a mournful and passionate Religion ? Thus whilst we have wrongful Apprehensions of God, they must necessarily mislead us into false Ways of Worship, because we can no otherwise worship him than by rendering him such Services as are suitable to the Apprehensions we have of his *Nature* ; and therefore while we think any otherwise of his Nature than it is, we must necessarily think such Services suitable to it as are not.

But if we truly understand what God is, we cannot but apprehend what Worship is suitable to him, by that eternal *Congruity* and *Proportion* that there is between *Things* and *Things*, which is as ob-

vious to Men's Minds, as Sounds and Colours to their *Ears* and *Eyes*. If God be a Being endowed with *such* and *such* Perfections, every Man's Mind will tell him that between such an *Object* and such *Actions* and *Affections* there is a *natural* Congruity, and therefore *so* and *so* he ought to be *treated* and *address'd* to, with *such* and *such* Actions and Affections to be *served* and *worshipped*. So that if we apprehend God truly as he is, circled with all his natural *Glories* and *Perfections*, our *Apprehensions* will produce in us such *Affections*, and our Affections such *Deportment* and *Behaviour* towards him as are *suitable* to the Perfections of his Nature, and we shall worship him with *such* Services as will both *please* and *become* him; with *admiring* Thoughts, and *dutiful* Wills, and *God-like* Affections; with an *ingenuous* Fear, an *humble* Confidence and an *obedient* Love; with *cheerful* Praises and *profound* Adorations; with *sober*, *wise*, and *rational* Devotions; such as will *wing* and *employ* our *best* Affections and most *noble* Faculties; for it is such a *Worship* only that can *suit* such *Perfections*, and *please* such a *Nature* as God's.

II. A *right Apprehension* of God is also necessary to *inspire* us with the best *Principle* of serving him. For it is certain that there is no *Principle* in human Nature that will so *effectually* engage us to the *service* of God, or render our *Service* so acceptable to him, as that of *Love*; which will tune our Wills into such an *Harmony* with *God's*, that we shall no longer *chuse* and *refuse* according to our particular *likings* or *dislikings*, but what is most *pleasing* or *displeasing* to him will be so to us; and our Wills being thus *united* and *subjected* to his, our Obedi-
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ence will extend to all his Commands and admit no other *bounds* but his *Will* and *Pleasure*. Whereas if we do not obey him out of *Love*, we shall endeavour to *contract* our Obedience into as *narrow* a Compass as may be, because we shall render it to him with a *grudging* Mind, and consequently with a *narrow* and a *stingy* Hand; for we shall serve him no farther than we are *driven* by *fear* and the *restless* Importunities of a *clamorous* Conscience, and so consequently fall *infinitely* short of our Duty, and take up in a *partial* and *hypocritical* Obedience. For while we do not *love* him, it is impossible we should *obey* him with a *ready* Will, which is the proper *seat* of his *Empire*; and while we obey him with a *stubborn* and *rebellious* Will, we are only his *Slaves*, but the Devil's *Subjects*. 'Till therefore we do *obey* him, at least in some measure from a Principle of *Love*, it is impossible our Obedience should be either *Universal* or *Sincere*.

But to the inspiring our Souls with this *Principle*, there is nothing more necessary than *right Apprehensions* of God, who in himself is doubtless the most amiable of Beings, as having all those Perfections in *infinite* Degrees, that can *beget* or *deserve* a rational Affection. So that we cannot think him to be any way otherwise than he is, without thinking him less lovely, and detracting more or less from the infinite *Beauty* of his Nature: For since he cannot be more Lovely than he is *in himself*, every false Apprehension of him must needs represent him less Lovely. But since of all his Perfections, that of his *Goodness* is the most powerful Motive and Engagement of *Love*, there is nothing more necessary to kindle our Love to

him than right *Apprehensions* thereof. For being infinitely good, as he is, in his own Nature, it is impossible we should conceive him to be better than he is; and therefore every *false* Notion we entertain of his *Goodness* must necessarily detract from it, and so much as we detract from his *Goodness*, so much we detract from the principal Reason and Motive of our loving him. And therefore in order to the engaging of our *Love* to him, it concerns us above all Things not to entertain any *Opinion* of him that reflects a *Disparagement* on his *Goodness*. For too many such Opinions there are that have been imbibed among *Christians* as the *fundamental* Principles of their *Orthodoxy*; namely such as these, that God's *Sovereign Will* is the sole *Rule* of his *Actions*, and that he doth Things not because they are just and reasonable, but that they are just and reasonable because he doth them; as if he were merely an *Omnipotent, blind Will* that acts without *Reason*, and did run through the World like an irresistible Whirlwind, hurrying all Things before him without any Consideration of *Right* or *Wrong*; that his Decrees of governing and disposing his Creatures are wholly founded in his absolute and irresistible Will, that determines of the everlasting Fate of Souls without any *Reason*, or *Foresight* or *Condition*; that by this his unaccountable Will he hath impaled the far greater Part of them within an absolute Decree of *Reprobation*, for no other End but that *Nimrod-like*, he might have Game enough to sport and breath his *Vengeance* for ever; and that having nailed them to this woeful Cross by this his *dire* Decree, he bids them *save themselves* and *come down*, as those cruel Mockers did

did our Saviour, and because they do not obey, torments and cruciates them for ever, tho' he knows they are not able to do it of *themselves*, and hath purposed never to enable them to do it. Which Opinions do represent God in such a formidable Dress, circled with such a stern and ghastly Majesty, as is more apt to inspire us with *Horror* than *Love*. For tho' by persuading ourselves that we are of the small Number of his elected Favourites, we may work our Minds into some Degree of Love to him; yet when we consider how severely he hath treated the rest of our Fellow-Creatures, without any other Reason but his own *Will*, this will intermingle such a *Grimness* with his Smiles, such a *Terror* with those Charms for which we love him, as must necessarily *damp* the Fervours of our Love, and ever and anon freeze it into *Horror* and *Astonishment*, and so *Fear* will be at least the predominant Principle of our *Obedience*; and while it is so, our Religion must needs languish under great *Imperfections* and *Infirmities*. For while our *Fear* and *Dread* of God is the governing Principle of our Religion, we shall but do *Penance* in all our *Addresses* to him, and every Act of our *Obedience* will be a kind of *Martyrdom*, so that we shall never be able to entertain any *cheerful* Converse or *friendly* Society with him, and yet serve him we must, for fear our *Neglect* of him should rouze his *Vengeance* against us; and between this *Necessity* of coming to him, and this *Fearfulness* of approaching him, what can there be begotten but a forced and constrained Devotion, which because we do not love, we would willingly leave, did not our *Dread* and *Horror* of him drag us to his Altars. And as we shall serve

him with a forced Obedience, so we shall obey him with a *sordid* and *niggardly* Affection; and while we *grudge* him our Obedience, we shall be most *backward* to obey him in those Instances of Duty that are of greatest Moment and most pleasing to *him*, and most *forward* in those that are of least Concern and most pleasing to *our selves*. Thus while our Minds are ridden with sour and rigid Apprehensions of God, they still inspire us with a slavish Dread of him, and that will restrain and contract our Obedience to him. Thus *Maximus Tyrius* excellently represents the Case, ὁ μὲν εὐσεβὴς φίλος Θεῷ, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων κόλαξ Θεῷ· καὶ μακάριος, ὁ εὐσεβὴς ὁ φίλος Θεῷ, δυσυχὴς δὲ ὁ δεισιδαίμων· ὁ μὲν παρσῶν τῇ ἀρετῇ πρόσκειται τοῖς Θεοῖς ἀνευ δέους· ὁ δὲ ταπεινὸς διὰ μοχθηρίαν, μέγα πολλῷ δέους, δύσελπις, καὶ δεδιὼς τὰς Θεὰς ὥσπερ τὰς τυράννας, *i. e.* the truly religious Man is the Friend of God, but the Superstitious is his Flatterer, and the former is happy, but the latter miserable; for the one being encouraged by his own Virtue, approaches God without any slavish Fear and Dread, but the other being debased with the Sense of his own Wickedness, approaches him with Trembling and Despair, dreading him as a cruel Tyrant, *Dissert.* 4.

If therefore we would render him a *cheerful*, *free* and *universal* Obedience, we must endeavour to represent him fairly to our own Minds, and to think of him as he is, and as he hath represented himself in the holy Scriptures, *i. e.* as a *bountiful* Benefactor to all his Creation, and an *universal* Lover of the Souls of Men; that would have *all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge*

ledge of the Truth, and doth heartily and readily contribute to our eternal welfare; that leaves no art of Love, no method of Kindness unattempted to rescue us from eternal Perdition, and when we have utterly baffled and defeated them all, doth most unwillingly abandon us to the woeful fate we have chosen and prepared for our selves; that in punishing even the most incorrigible Sinners doth not at all design to wreak and gratify his own Revenge, but to do Good to the World, and warn others by their Sufferings not to imitate their Sins: And in a word, that importunately invites us back when we are gone astray, and upon our return graciously receives us, and when he hath received us is infinitely Industrious to prepare us for Happiness, and when he hath prepared us abundantly, Rewards us, and when he hath rewarded us, everlastingly Triumphs in our Glory and Beatitude; these and such like Thoughts are truly worthy of God, and besitting the infinite goodness of his Nature, and as such do earnestly recommend him to our Affections, as the most amiable and endearing Object in the World; and when by such Recommendation they have captivated our Affections, and kindled our Hearts into an unfeigned Love of him, they have inspired us with such a vigorous Principle of Action, as will both animate and ennoble our Religion, and render it truly worthy of God and our selves: For then we shall serve him with a free and dutiful Will, a liberal Affection, and a chearful Heart, and consequently render him a full, and generous, and willing Obedience. For so holy David tells us, *Psal. cxix. 32. I will run the ways of thy commandments when thou shalt en-*

enlarge my Heart, i. e. when thou shalt open and widen my Heart with the Love of thee, (for so St. Paul expounds the Phrase, 2 Cor. vi. 11.) I shall most *readily* and *cheerfully* obey thee.

III. A *right Apprehension* of God is also necessary to direct us to the End for which we are to serve him; without which it is impossible we should serve him acceptably. For as a good Intention doth not justify a bad Action, so neither doth a good Action a bad Intention, and unless both are good, neither are acceptable. If I do an Action that is materially good, with respect to a bad End, I *unballow* and *vitiate* it, and render it formally evil. If I fast for *Strife*, or give Alms for *Vain-glory*, or pray to give a Colour to my *Rapines* and *Oppressions*, my very Devotion is a *Cheat*, my Mortification a *Lie*, and my Charity an *Imposture*. So that in order to our serving of God acceptably, it is necessary we should direct those Services we render him to their right and proper End; and what that is we cannot well understand unless we have a *right Apprehension* of his Nature; for to be sure God hath proposed that to us for the End of our Worship, which is most agreeable to his own Perfection; and therefore unless we have a *right* Notion of his Perfections, how can we rightly apprehend what End is most agreeable to them? As for Instance, the right End of our serving him, is that we may glorify him for ever in an everlasting *Participation* of his *Perfection* and *Happiness*; and this we can be no otherwise certain of, than by a true Survey and Inspection of his *Nature*, which will instruct us that being infinitely perfect as he is, he must be infinitely happy within himself, and so

so can design no *Self-end* without himself, and consequently that the End for which he requires our Service is not any *Advantage* he expects to reap from it, or further *Addition* to his own Happiness, he being from all Eternity *past* as completely happy as he can be to all Eternity *to come*; and therefore what other End can he be supposed to aim at than our Good and Happiness? It is true indeed, he designs to glorify himself in our Happiness; but how? Not to render himself more glorious by it than he is in himself, for that is impossible; but to *display* and *shew forth* his own essential Glory to all that are capable of *admiring* and *imitating* him, that thereby he might *invite* them to *transcribe* that *Goodness* of his into their Natures, of which his Glory is the *Shine* and *Lustre*, and thereby to glorify themselves; and what can more effectually display the Glory of a Being who is infinitely *wise* and *powerful* and *good*, than to *contrive* and *effect* the Happiness of his *Creatures*, and especially of his *rational* Creatures, who of all others have the most ample Capacity of Happiness? Doubtless the highest Glory of an infinite *Power*, that is conducted by an infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, is to *contrive* and *execute* the most effectual Methods of doing the greatest Good; and what greater Good can such a Power effect, than the *eternal* Happiness of *reasonable* Creatures? So that *God's* Glory and our Happiness are so inseparably conjoined, that we cannot aim right at either, but we must hit *both*, and whether we say that his End is his *own* Glory or our Happiness, it is the same Thing; for his Glory is our Happiness, and our Happiness is his Glory, and

and when he hath *perfected* our Nature, and *advanced* it to the highest Happiness it is *capable* of, it will *shine back* upon him, even as all other glorious *Effects* do on their *Causes*, and *reflect* everlasting *Honour* on that infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* and *Goodness* from whence it was *derived*. Thus right *Apprehensions* of the Nature of God will naturally lead us to the great End which he proposes in all his *Transactions* with us, and thereby *direct* us what End *we* are to propose in our *Transactions* with *him*. For that which is God's End ought to be *ours*, and therefore since *his* End is *his own* Glory, or, which is the same thing, *our* everlasting Happiness, it ought to be *ours* also.

But now while we *misapprehend* the Nature of God, we shall be apt to set up *false* and *indirect* Ends of serving him; as for Instance, whilst we look upon him as a *selfish* Being, that *centers* wholly in himself, and *separates* his Interest from the Interest of his *Creatures*, doing every thing merely for his *own sake*, we shall think ourselves obliged in all our *Addresses* to him, to set aside *our own* Interest and Happiness, and to aim *singly* and *separately* at his Honour and Glory; and yet this is the great *Fundamental* of the whole *Scheme* of some Men's Divinity, *viz.* That God aims wholly at *himself*, and regards the Good of his *Creatures* no farther than it serves *his own* Interest; that he made this World out of mere *Ostentation*, to *boast* and *magnify* his own *Power* and *Greatness*; and gives *Laws* to his *Creatures*, and exacts their *Obedience* for no other Reason but because it is for his *Honour* to be *served* and *worshipped*; that he created *Hell* only to shew the *Power* of his *Wrath*,
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and prepare an everlasting *Triumph* for his *Vengeance*; and erected *Heaven* for a *Theatre* to shew himself on, that so having filled it with a vast *Corona* of *Angelical* and *Saintly* Spectators, he might *display* the *Glory* of his *Majesty* before them, and thereby provoke them to *extol* and *praise* and *commend* him for ever. And while we thus conceive of God, how can we hope that he will ever be pleased with us unless we aim at the same End that he doth? *i. e.* unless laying aside all regard to *ourselves* and *our own* Happiness both *here* and *hereafter*, we *intirely* direct all our *Worship* and *Service* to his *Glory* and *Interest*; which being impossible for us to do, whilst we have so much *Self-love* and so much *Indigence together*, will either render our Religion wholly *unpracticable*, or perplex us with eternal Doubts of its *Truth* and *Sincerity*.

And supposing we *could* direct *all* our Religion to this End, this instead of rendering it more *acceptable* to God would only render it more *unworthy* of him; for then we should serve him under the Notion of his *Benefactors* rather than of his *Pensioners*, with a Design to *enrich* him rather than to *be enriched* by him: And what an *unbecoming* Presumption is it for such *indigent* Creatures as we to entertain the least Thought of *contributing* to God, or making any *Addition* to his *infinite* Store? He is above all *Want*, being infinitely satisfied from the inexhaustible Fountain of *his own* Perfections; and for us to imagine that he needs our Services, and *requires* them to serve his own *Interest*, is to blaspheme his *All-sufficiency*, and suppose him a *poor* and *indigent* Being, that
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for want of a *perfect* Satisfaction *within himself*, is forced to *roam* abroad and raise *Taxes* upon his Creatures to *enrich* and *supply* himself. For if we serve him for any End at all, it must be either to do him good or our selves; if it be to do him good, we reproach and dishonour him, by supposing that he hath need of us and our Service, which can do him no good unless he hath *some* need of them. So that whatsoever some *high-flown* Enthusiasts may pretend, that it is *sordid* and *mercenary* to serve God for *our own* good, I am sure to serve him for his good is *prophane* and *blasphemous*; and therefore either we must serve him for no good, or serve him for our own; and since he is so infinitely sufficient to himself, that nothing we can do can *benefit* and *advantage* him, to what better *Purpose* can we *worship* and *serve* him, than to *receive* Benefit and Advantage from him, which instead of being *base* and *mercenary*, is a Purpose most becoming both *God* and *ourselves*? For to serve him with an *Intent* not to give to, but to receive from him, is to acknowledge his *Fulness* and our own *Want*, his *All-sufficiency* and our own *Poverty*; whereas by serving him to the *contrary* Purpose, we do in effect set up our selves above him, it being much *greater* to give than it is to receive; and to make that the End of our worshipping God, which doth in effect suppose him to be our *Inferior*, is to make ourselves *Gods* instead of *Votaries*. What the true End therefore is of our *serving* God, may be easily inferred from a *right Apprehension* of his Nature. For do but consider him as a Being that is above all want, that is infinitely satisfied in *his own* Perfections,

fections, and an *unbounded* Ocean of Happiness to *himself*, and then what other End can you propose in *servi*ng him, but to *derive* Perfection and Happiness from him, in the *Accomplishment* of which *be* and you will be *glorified* together?

IV. and lastly, A *right Apprehension* of God is also necessary to furnish us with proper *Motives* and *Encouragements* to serve him. It is the Nature of all reasonable Beings to be *drawn forth* into Action by *Motives* and *Arguments*; and the most *powerful* Arguments to move us *Godward*, are drawn from the *Nature* of God, from his *Majesty* and *Holiness*, his *Truth* and *Justice*, his *Mercy* and *Goodness*; none of which can have their *just* and *full* Influence upon us, unless we have a *right* and *genuine* Apprehension of them. The Consideration of his *Majesty* is naturally apt to *strike* our Minds into an *awful* Reverence of his *Authority*; but if we look upon it under the Notion of a *mere arbitrary* Greatness, that governs not it self by *Counsel* and *Reason*, but by a *blind* and *absolute* and *unaccountable* Will, that always chuses and refuses *pro imperio*, without any Regard to the eternal Reasons of things, we may be *astonished* and *confounded* at it, but we can never truly reverence it. The Consideration of his *Holiness* is naturally apt to deter us from approaching him with *vicious* and *impure* Affections; but if we place his Holiness in a *mere formal* Affectation of external *Decency*, *Respect* and *Reverence*, and not in the *immutable* Conformity of his Will with the eternal Rules of *Righteousness*, it may move us to be very ceremonious and respectful to him, as to the *Place*, and *Garb*, and *Posture* of our Worship, but it will never

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prevail with us to cleanse and rectify our Hearts and Affections. Again, the Consideration of his *Justice* is naturally apt to restrain us from affronting his Authority by perverse and wilful Violations of his *Laws*; but while we look upon it as a stern and implacable Attribute, which nothing will appease and satisfy but *Blood* and *Revenge*, it may overwhelm us with *Horror* and *Despair*, but it will never persuade us to *reform* and *amend*. Once more, the Consideration of his *Mercy* is naturally apt, when we are gone astray, to invite us to return, with the hopeful Prospect it gives us of Pardon and Reconciliation; but while we look upon it under the Notion of a *blind* Pity, or *effeminate* easiness and Tendernefs of Nature, that will admit of no Severity, how wholesome soever or necessary to the Ends of Government; instead of moving us to Repentance, it will animate us in our Rebellion. In fine, the Consideration of his *Goodness* is naturally apt to work upon our *Ingenuity*, and to draw us Godwards with *the Cords of a Man, and the Bonds of Love*; but whilst we mistake it for a blind Partiality, that chuses its Favourites without Reason, and *rewards* them without Respect to their Qualifications, instead of *captivating* our Love, it will *provoke* our *Disdain*, and excite in us a secret *Contempt* and *Aversion*.

Thus though the Nature of God be in it self a most fruitful Topick of *Motives* and *Arguments* to engage us to *serve* and *obey* him, yet by the false Representations that are sometimes made of it, it may be perverted into an *Inducement* to Wickedness, and made a plausible Pretence to *encourage* and *justify* us in our Rebellions against him. Whilst

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we look upon God as he is in himself, shining with his own unstained and immaculate Glories, there is nothing more apt to influence all the *springs* of *Motion* within us ; to *inflame* our Love, *encourage* our Hope, and *alarm* our Fear, and by *these* to set the Wheels of our Obedience a-going. For there is nothing in human Nature that is capable of being *moved* and *affected* by *Reason*, which hath not an answerable Reason in the nature of God to *move* and *affect* it. And as in him there are all the Reasons that can affect us, so there is all the Force and Efficacy of those Reasons, every thing in him being *Perfect* and *Infinite* ; in him there is an infinite *Beauty* to attract our Love, an infinite *Good* to inflame our *Desire*, an infinite *Kindness* to affect our *Ingenuity*, an infinite *Justice* armed with an infinite *Power* to awaken our *Fear*, an infinite *Mercy* to invite our *Hope*, and an infinite *Truth* to confirm and support it. So that it is beyond the Power of all human Imagination, to *frame* or *fancy* an Object that is so every way *fitted* to *affect* human Nature, and influence all its Principles of Action, as God in himself is. Whilst therefore we apprehend him truly, and as he is in himself, the Consideration of him must needs be of wonderful Force to oblige us to serve and obey him, and there is not one of all those glorious Perfections in which his Nature is arrayed, but will suggest to us some powerful Persuasive to *Piety* and *Virtue*, and either by our *Fear* or our *Hope*, our *Love* or our *Gratitude*, incline our Hearts to keep his Commandments. So that if we are *ignorant* of his Perfections, or do entertain false Notions concerning them, we shall either want those

Motives to Piety which they naturally *suggest*, or draw Arguments from them to *encourage* and *justify* us in our rebellions against him. And thus you see in all these Instances how indispensably necessary *right* Notions of God are to engage us to *serve* and *obey* him.

S E C T. II.

Rules for the forming right Apprehensions of God.

Dionysius the *Areopagite*, and from him all the *Schoolmen*, assign three ways by which we are to frame our Apprehensions of the Nature of God, viz. *Viam Causalitatis*, *viam Eminentiæ*, & *viam Remotionis*, i. e. the way of *Causality*, the way of *Eminency*, and the way of *Remotion*. The first consists in arguing from those Perfections which God hath *caused* and *produced* in his Creatures to the Perfections of his *Nature*. For whatsoever *degrees* of Perfection there are in the *Creature*, they must either be *uncreated*, which is a Contradiction, or *flow* from the Creator as from the immense *Ocean* of all Perfection; but it is impossible they should flow from him, unless they were first in him. So that when we behold *such* and *such* Perfections in the Creature, we may from them most certainly infer that the same are all in God, who is the *Cause* and *Fountain* of them; and
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though the divine Nature abounds with *innumerable* Virtues and Perfections, yet it is impossible for us by our own *natural* Light to *discover* any of them than those of which he himself hath *imprinted* some *Specimens* upon created Beings; these being the only *Scales* by which our Understanding can *ascend* to the reach and view of the divine Perfections. But because all *created* Perfections are not only *short* in their *Degrees*, but also intermingled with *Defects* in their very *Kind* and *Nature*; therefore in attributing them to God we ought carefully to abstract from them whatever is *Defective*, whether it be in *kind* or *degree*. For God is the cause of *Perfection* only, but not of *Defect*, which so far forth as it is *natural* to *created* Beings hath *no cause* at all, but is merely a *Negation* or *Non-entity*. For every created Thing was a *Negation* or *Non-entity* before ever it had a *positive* Being, and it had only *so much* of its *primitive* Negation *taken away* from it, as it had *positive* being *conferred* on it: And therefore so far forth as it is, its being is to be attributed to that *sovereign Cause* that produced it, but so far forth as it is *not*, its *not being* is to be attributed to that *Original Non-entity* out of which it was produced. For that which was *once* nothing would *still* have been nothing, had it not been for the *cause* that gave *being* to it; and therefore that it is *so far* nothing still, *i. e. limited* and *defective*, is only to be attributed to its own *primitive* Nothingness. As for Instance, If I give a poor Man an Hundred Pounds, that he is worth so much Money is wholly owing to me, but that he is not worth a hundred more, is owing only to his own *Poverty*; and just so, that I have such and such

Perfections of Being is wholly owing to God who produced me out of Nothing, but that I have such and such *Defects* of Being, is only owing to that *Non-entity* out of which he produced me ; and therefore since our *Perfections* are derived from God, but not our *Defects*, it is altogether as unreasonable to attribute the latter to him, as it is reasonable to attribute the former.

Now the *Defects* of created Perfections which we are to *remove* and *abstract* from God in our Conceptions of him are of two Sorts : First of the *Thing* : Secondly of the *mode of the Thing*. The Defect of the *Thing* is when the Thing *itself* is such as that it wholly excludes something much *better* and more *perfect* ; thus *Matter* for Instance is defective in the Thing, because it excludes *spiritual* and *immaterial* Substance, which is much more *excellent* than itself. The Defect of the *Mode of the Thing*, is when the Thing is so excellent in *itself*, as that it excludes nothing better, but yet is deficient in *degrees* of Perfection. As for instance, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, *Reason* and *Understanding*, are Things so excellent *in themselves*, as that they exclude nothing that is more excellent, but yet as residing in created Beings want a great many *possible degrees* of Perfection. Now both these defects being *natural* and *uncaused*, and so cannot proceed from the Author of Nature, and not proceeding *from* him, they cannot be supposed to be *in* him, and therefore in our Conceptions of him ought not to be attributed *to* him. In respect therefore of these *twofold* Defects in created Perfections, it is necessary we should conceive of God in the way of *Remotion* and *Eminence*, as well as of *Causality* ;
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otherwise we shall injuriously attribute to him the *Defects* of his Creatures, of which he is not the Cause, as well as their *Perfections*, of which he is. If therefore we would do God right in our Thoughts and Conceptions of him, we must in the first Place remove from him all *defect in the Thing*, that is, all *matter* and *material* Perfections; because they are defective in their very *kind* and *nature*, as excluding such Substance and Perfections as are incomparably more excellent than themselves; and this is to conceive of him in the way of *Remotion*, which consists in removing all kind of *matter* and *material* Affections from our Thoughts and Apprehensions of God. And then in the second Place we must abstract from him all defect *in the mode of the Thing*, i. e. all the Defect of *degrees* of these *spiritual* Perfections of the Creature, which we attribute to him; and *raise* and *exalt* them in our own Minds to their utmost *height* and *eminence*; and this is to conceive of him in the way of *Eminency*; which consists in ascribing to God the *short* and *limited* Perfections of his Creatures *abstracted* from all *defect* and *limitation*. These *three* ways therefore are all indispensably *necessary* to lead us to a true discovery of the Nature of God; as will yet farther appear by the following Rules I shall lay down for the forming a right Notion and Apprehension of him.

First, if we would think *aright* of God, we must attribute all *possible Perfection* to him.

Secondly, In forming our Notions of his Perfections we must take our rise from the Perfections we behold in his Creatures.

Thirdly, In *ascribing* to him the Perfections of his Creatures we must *abstract* from them every Thing that is *Defective* and *Imperfect*.

Fourthly, In *arguing* from the Perfections of the Creature to the Perfections of God, we must distinguish between the *state* and *relations* of God and Creature.

Fifthly, Though in arguing from the Perfections of the Creature to the Perfections of God we are not to subject him to the Rules of a Creature, yet we are not always to suppose his *Will* and his *Power* to be in perfect *subjection* to the Perfections of his *Nature*.

Sixthly, In conceiving of his Perfections we must always suppose them to be exactly *harmonious* and *consistent* with each other.

I. To the forming of a *right Apprehension* of God, it is necessary that we ascribe to him all *possible Perfection*. For he being the *first* and *supreme Cause* from whence all the *Perfections* of Being are *derived*, must necessarily include all Perfection *in himself*, and be all those Perfections which he hath *communicated* to others; for how can he *give* that which he *hath not*? It is true indeed, *free Causes* may give *less* to their Effects than they have in themselves, but it is impossible they should give *more*; though they may *withhold* from those Effects any *Perfection* or *degree* of Perfection which they *have*, they cannot *derive* to them any which they *have not*. Whatsoever therefore is a *Perfection* of Being, must necessarily be *essential* to that *supreme Cause* from whence all Being is *derived*; otherwise there would be *more* in his *Effects* than
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there is in himself, and consequently more than he could *give* or be the *cause of*, which is a Contradiction.

And as all those Perfections that are in *created* Beings must necessarily *exist* in the nature of God, so must all those too that are *possible in themselves*. For every Perfection that is possible in itself must be *possible to him* who is the Cause of all Things; but no Perfection can be possible to him that is not actually in him: For no Cause can produce that Perfection in *another* which it hath not in *itself*, and therefore if there be any Perfection that is not in him, it is impossible it should ever be produced by him, and that which is impossible to *God*, must be impossible in his *own Nature*; that which is not an Object of *omnipotent* Power is not an Object of *any* Power, and that which is not an Object of *any* Power, is in itself *impossible*. Since therefore every Perfection that is possible in *itself* must be possible to God, and since no Perfection that is not *in him* can be possible *to him*; it necessarily follows, that all the Perfections that are possible in themselves are actually existing in the Nature of God.

II. In *forming* our Notions of *God's* Perfections, we must take our *rise* from those Perfections which we behold in his *Creatures*. For our Understanding being too *short sighted* to penetrate immediately into the *substance* and *essence* of Things, hath no other way to *know* and *apprehend* them, but either by their *Causes* or by their *Effects*; but now God being the *first* and *supreme* Fountain of all Causes cannot be known by his *Cause*, because he hath *none*, and therefore is knowable only by

his *Effects*, that is, by the *works of his Creation* that lie before us, and are within the Prospect of our Understandings; in the which all that is *Excellent* and *Good* is an illustrious *Comment* and *Paraphrase* upon God.

Now the *Effects* of God are all reducible to these four Generals, *Substance* or *Essence*, *Life*, *Sense* and *Reason*; all which are in *Man*, who is the *Epitome* of the World, and a compleat *Model* of all the Works of God; and therefore not only these, but all the proper *Excellencies* and *Perfections* of these must be supposed to be in God, from whom they are *derived*.

The first *Effect* of God is *Substance*. Now the proper *Perfections* of *Substance* are *Amplitude* and *Fulness* of Being. By the *Amplitude* of *Substance*, I mean its greatness or largeness as to the diffusion or extent of it, in opposition to littleness, or which is the same thing, to be defined to, or circumscribed within a small and inconsiderable Space; by the *Fulness* of *Substance* I mean its having more of *Essence* or *Being*, by which it is more removed from not being, in Opposition to Things that have but little *Being* in them, that are of so fleeting and transitory a Nature as that they are next to nothing. Wherefore in conceiving of God, we must ascribe to him these *Perfections* of *Substance*, even to their utmost Possibility, that is, we must conceive him to be a *Being* of infinite *Amplitude*, that is neither defined nor circumscribed within any certain space, but co-exists with, and penetrates and passes through all Things; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Immensity*, which consists in being unconfined by

any Bounds of Space in the *out-spreading* of himself to all Places that we can *see* or *imagine*, and infinitely *beyond* them. And then in conceiving of him we must also ascribe to him *infinite Fulness* of Being, by which he is so *infinitely* removed from *not being*, as that he cannot *but* be; and by thus conceiving of him, we attribute to him *necessary Existence*, which consists in being out of all *Possibility* of *not being*.

But then secondly, another of those Works of God from which we are to take our Rise in conceiving of his Perfections, is *Life*. For he is the *Cause* and *Fountain* of all that Life that is in the World, and therefore must not only have Life in himself, but the *utmost Perfection* of it also that is possible. Now the Perfections of Life are *Activity* and *Duration*; by *Activity* I mean a vigorous *Power* and *Ability* to act, in Opposition to *Weakness* and *Impotence*, which must needs be a great Perfection of Life, which is the *Spring* and *Principle* of Action; by *Duration* I mean a *long Continuance* of Life, in Opposition to that which is *short* and *momentary*; for the more *lasting* the Life is, the more *perfect* it is, and the *more* there is of it. Wherefore in conceiving of God we must ascribe to him the utmost *Perfection* of *Life* that is possible; that is, we must conceive him to be infinitely *active* and *powerful*, and doth what he *pleases* in Heaven and on Earth, and can effect whatsoever is possible in itself, and not repugnant to the other Perfections of his Nature; and in thus conceiving of him, we attribute *Omnipotence* to him, which consists in an Ability to do *every thing* that doth not *imply a Contradiction*, either to the Nature

ture of the *Things themselves*, or to the Nature and Perfections of the *Doer*; and then in conceiving of him we must also ascribe to him an *infinite Duration* of Life, that is, a Life that is not *bounded* either by a *Beginning* or an *End*, but is *from everlasting to everlasting*, and *co-exists* and runs *parallel* with all Duration *past*, and *present*, and *to come*; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute *Eternity* to him, which consists in a *boundless* Duration of Life without any Term of *Beginning* or *End*.

But then thirdly, Another of these Effects of God from which we are to take our Rise in conceiving the Perfections of God, is *Sense*; by which I do not understand *carnal* or *material* Sense only, which consists in *perceiving* the *Strokes* and *Impressions* of *material* Objects on our Sensories, but Sense in the general, whether it be of *material* or *spiritual* Beings. For that *spiritual* Beings have as *exquisite* a Sense of *spiritual* Objects, as *corporal* of *corporeal* ones, there is no doubt to be made; because otherwise we must suppose them *insensible* both of *Pleasure* and *Pain*. Now the Perfection of Sense is *Quickness* and *Sagacity* of Perception, whether it be of *painful* or of *pleasant*, *grateful* or *ungrateful* Objects; and that is to be found not only in *Beasts* and *Men*, but also in *separated* Spirits, in *Angels*, and in *God himself*. For tho' none of these have any *corporeal* Sense to *feel* and *perceive* the *Impressions* of *corporal* Objects, yet that both *Angels* and *separated* Spirits have a *spiritual* Sense of *spiritual* Impressions, by which they are subjected to *Pain* and *Pleasure*, cannot be denied; and though God by the infinite Perfection of his Nature is exempt

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from all Sense of *Pain*, yet it cannot be supposed that he who is the *Fountain* from whence all Sense is *derived* should himself be *insensible*; and if he be not, we ought to suppose him as sensible of all that is truly *pleasant* and *good* as it is possible to be; and where there is no *infinite Good*, as there is in the Nature of God, it is possible to be *infinitely sensible* of it; and in thus conceiving, we attribute to him *infinite Happiness*. For what else is an infinite *Sense* of *Good* but infinite *Pleasure* and *Happiness*; and this is the Happiness of God, that he is infinitely *perfect* in himself, and infinitely *sensible* of his own Perfections, and therein infinitely *pleased* and *delighted*.

Fourthly and lastly, Another of those Works of God from whence we are to take our Rise in conceiving of his Perfections, is *Reason*. For that *Light* of Reason which shineth in *human* and *angelical* Minds being *rayed* forth, and *derived* from him, he must be supposed not only to have Reason *in himself*, but to have it in its utmost *possible Perfection*. Now the Perfection of Reason consists in *Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, in the *Understanding*, and *Rectitude* or *Righteousness* in the *Will*. By *Knowledge* I mean considering and understanding Things *absolutely* as they are in their own *Natures*, in their *Powers* and *Properties*, *Differences* and *Circumstances*. By *Wisdom* I understand a thorough Consideration of Things as they are related to one another, under the Notion of *Means* and *Ends*, and of their *Fitness* or *Unfitness* to the End and Purposes they are designed for. Wherefore in conceiving of God we must ascribe to him all *possible* Knowledge and Wisdom, that
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is, a *perfect* Comprehension of all Things that either *are*, or *have been*, or *shall be*, or *can be* ; in short, a Knowledge infinitely *extensive*, as comprehending all *knowable* Objects, and infinitely *intensive*, as seeing every *single* Object in all its *Relations*, *Dependencies*, and *Circumstances*, with a most *perfect* and *infallible* View ; and in thus conceiving of him, we attribute to him *Omniscience* and *infinite Wisdom*. By *Rectitude* or *Righteousness* in the *Will*, which is the other Perfection of Reason, I mean a *Conformity* of the *Will*, and consequently of the *Affections* and *Actions*, to all that right Reason *dictates* and *prescribes* ; for the proper *Office* of Reason is to *conduct* the *Will*, and to give *Bounds* and *Measures* to our Principles of Action ; and in *following* right Reason, and *choosing* and *refusing* by its eternal *Prescriptions*, consists the *Rectitude* of the *Will*, and in that all *moral* Perfection. In conceiving of God therefore we must attribute to him all those *moral Perfections* which consist in the *intire* Compliance of his *Will* with the Dictates of his *infallible Reason*, and *choosing* every thing which right Reason *approves*, and *refusing* every thing which it *disallows*, and this with the most perfect *Freedom* and *Exactness* ; and in thus conceiving of him we attribute to him infinite *Goodness*, infinite *Justice*, and infinite *Truth*. For as for the first, *viz.* infinite *Goodness*, which consists in the *invariable* Inclination of his *Will* to do good *to*, and procure the Happiness of his Creatures, by which he is infinitely removed from *Envy* and *Malice*, right Reason dictates to him that being infinitely happy in *himself*, the *best* and most *becoming* thing he can do, is to *propagate*

pagate his own *Likeness* and *Resemblance* by doing good to, and procuring the *Happiness* of *Others*; and that *Envy* and *Malice*, which are the Properties of *poor* and *indigent* Beings, are infinitely *unbecoming* him who is a *self-sufficient* Nature: And accordingly his *Will*, which always follows his *Reason*, is infinitely *propense* to the *one*, and *averse* to the *other*. And as for the second, which is infinite *Justice*, which consists in dealing with his Creatures according to their several *Deserts*, by which he is infinitely removed from all *Partiality* and *Injustice*, right Reason dictates to him, that since there is an *immutable* Good and Evil in the Actions of *free* and *reasonable* Agents, it is fit that those who do good should *receive* Good from him, who is the supreme *Judge* and *Moderator*, and those who do Evil, Evil, in Proportion to the Good and Evil of their Doings; and that to *reward* evil Actions, and to *punish* good ones, or to reward those that are *less* good *beyond* those that are *more*, or punish those that are *more* evil *beneath* those that are *less*, is to go *cross* to the Natures and Reasons of Things; and by these Dictates of *Reason*, his *Will* is *invariably* regulated in all its Transactions with his Creatures. Lastly, as for infinite *Truth*, which consists in a perfect *Agreement* of his *Declarations* with his *Intentions*, especially in Matters of *Promise*, whereby he is infinitely removed from all *Deceit* and *Falshood*, right Reason dictates to him, that to speak *Truth* is the only natural *End* of *Speaking*, that to promise is to *give* a *Right*, and to *intend* to perform *strict Justice*; that on the contrary, *Lying* perverts the Use of *Speech*, and betrays a

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Baseness and *Meanness* of Spirit, that to *deceive* is to *injure*, and to *falsify* Promise is to *commit* a Robbery ; and accordingly his *Will*, which is ever guided by his *Reason*, *embraces* Truth, and *rejects* Falshood with infinite *Abhorrence*.

And thus from the various *Perfections* of God's *Works* which are *before* us, we may fairly argue to all the Perfections of God himself. For whatsoever Perfections he hath *given*, he must *have*, and whatsoever Perfections he hath, he must have so far as it is *possible* ; for if it be possible, it must be within his *Power*, and if it be within his Power to be sure 'tis included in his *Nature* ; otherwise he must chuse to be *less* perfect when it is in his Power to be *more*. And by thus taking our Rise to God from the Perfections of the *Creature*, we discover him to be an *immense*, *self-existing* Substance, that is *omnipotent*, *eternal*, infinitely *knowing* and *wise*, *just* and *good*, *faithful* and *happy*. But to render our Discovery yet more compleat,

III. It is necessary that in ascribing to him the Perfection of the Creature we *abstract* from them every thing that is *defective* and *imperfect*. For to be sure there is nothing can be defective or imperfect in the *Cause* and *Author* of all Perfection. So that whereas all other Beings have some *Defect* or other intermingled with their *Perfections*, and do either want some kind of Perfection, or some *Degree* of those Kinds wherewith they are adorned, God hath all *Kinds* and *all Degrees* of all Kinds of Perfection ; and so we must conceive of him, if we would *do* him *right*, when we attribute to him the above-named Perfections. As for instance, when we attribute to him the Perfections of *Substance*,
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we must *abstract* from them the Defect of *Corporeity* or *material* Extension, which compared with *Spirituality* is a mighty *Defect* and *Imperfection* of Substance, both as to its *Amplitude*, and *Fulness* of Essence. For no *corporeal* Substance can be at the same *Time* in the same *Place* where *another* corporeal Substance is; because it consists of such Parts as cannot *penetrate* each other; so that every *Body* must be *limited* in *Presence*, because it cannot be where *another* Body is; whereas a *Spirit* being penetrable *itself*, can penetrate or pass through *all Things*, and consequently be present at the same *Time*, and in the same *Place*, where not only other *Bodies* are, but other *Spirits* too. So that by attributing *Body* or *Matter* to God, we must necessarily *confine* and *limit* the *Amplitude* of his Substance, which if it be *bodily* must necessarily be *excluded* from all those Places which *other* bodily Substances are, and consequently have but a *finite* and *limited* Presence, which utterly destroys the infinite *Amplitude* or *Omnipresence* of his Substance. And then *bodily* Substances being all compounded of *divisible* Parts, and consequently liable to be *divided* and *corrupted*, cannot have that *Fulness* of Being in them which *Spirits* have, which are *simple* and *uncompounded* Substances, and consequently void of all *Principles* of *Corruption*; so that by attributing *Body* or *Matter* to God, we *substract* from the infinite *Fulness* of his Being, and instead of ascribing to him *necessary Existence*, which puts him beyond all *Possibility* of *not being*, degrade him into a *divisible* and *corruptible* Nature. Wherefore in attributing to God the Perfections of Substance, we must *abstract* from them

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all *Matter* and *material* Affections, and conceive of him as a most *pure* and *simple* Spirit.

Again, when we attribute to him the Perfections of *Life*, viz. *Power* or *Activity* and *Duration*, we must wholly *abstract* from them all those *Imperfections* with which they are *commixed* in the Creature. As for Instance, *Activity* in the Creature is attended with *Labour* and *Pains*; the not abstracting of which from the Activity of God made *Epicurus* suppose him to be a *restive* Being, that *withdrew* himself from Action, for fear of *disturbing* his own *Happiness* by it; whereas *Labour* and *Pains* are the *Imperfections* of Activity, and so ought not to be admitted into our Conception of God's, which being *infinite*, there is nothing can be *difficult* or *uneasy* to him. For it is because of *Imperfection* that *Labour* and *Trouble* do attend any Beings in their Operations; could they do what they do *perfectly*, it would be no *Labour* at all to them. God therefore having an *infinite Power* to effect what he pleases, whatsoever he *doth* he doth it most *perfectly*, and consequently without any *Toil* or *Labour*; and since all Things were *derived* from him, and are *dependent* upon him, they must all be *perfectly* subject to his *power*; and where there is perfect *Subjection* there can be no *Resistance*, and where there is no *Resistance* there can be no *Labour*. And then as for *Duration*, which is the other Perfection of *Life*, in the Creature it is attended with *Dependence*. For there is no Life but *depends* upon God, to be *shorten'd* or *prolong'd*, according to his Pleasure; the Lives of all Beings are *maintain'd* and *supplied* by his *all-enlivening* Power and Influence, which if he *withdraw* from them
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but one Moment they presently expire; so that the Duration of all *created* Life is dependent and precarious; and even those Beings that shall live for ever have no other Tenure of Life but God's *Will* and *Pleasure*, who with the *Breath* of his Nostrils can *blow* them out when he pleases. But the *Duration* of God's Life is altogether *independent*; for he subsists of himself, from that infinite Fulness of Being that is in him, and hath done so from all Eternity *past* when there was no other cause but himself in being, and therefore can do so to all Eternity *to come* without the Support or Assistance of any other Cause. So that he is not at all beholden for his Duration to the *good Will* and *Pleasure* of any other Being, but derives from an inexhaustible Spring of Life within himself, whence he also derives Life to all other Beings.

Again, when we attribute to him the Perfection of *Sense*, viz. *Quickness* and *Exquisiteness* of Perception, we must wholly abstract from it all that Imperfection with which it is attended in the Creature; for in them it is attended with sundry *Affections* which argue *Imperfection* in their *Nature* and *Happiness*; such as *Fear*, *Sorrow*, *Repentance*, *Desperation*, and the like; all which argue a Defect of *Power* or *Wisdom*, and proceed from a quick Sense of Evil *past*, or *present*, or *to come*, which is inconsistent with perfect Happiness. When therefore we attribute to God this Perfection of *Sense*, we must abstract from it all those *Affections* which proceed from the Sense of *Evil* or *Pain*. For he is so infinitely Perfect both in *Nature* and *Happiness*, that no Evil can approach him to *vex* or *disturb* him, or make any *painful* Im-

pressions on his Nature; and being so, it is impossible that in Propriety of Speech he should either *Fear* or *Grieve*, or *Repent*, or *Despair*. All these Affections indeed are in Scripture attributed to him, but then it is in an *improper* and *metaphorical* Sense; not as if he did at any time feel these Passions within *himself*, but because he *demeans* himself towards us as if he did; nor as if the Affections themselves had any place in his *Nature*, but because the natural *Effects* of them appear in his *Actions* and *Behaviour*. And though there is no doubt but he *resents* all those Evils which good Men suffer, and bad Men commit, yet it is not from any painful Impression that they make upon his Nature; for he neither feels the *Miseries* he pities and relieves, nor is vexed at the Sins he *detests* and *abhors*, but all the Resentment he hath both of the Evil of our Sufferings and Sins is perfectly calm to himself, and devoid of all Passion and Disturbance. 'Tis true his Will being perfectly reasonable must be differently affected towards different Objects, and contrarily affected towards contrary Objects, because they propose to it different and contrary *Reasons*; and therefore as it must be affected with *Complacency* towards good Objects, so it must be affected with *Abhorrence* towards bad; but this Abhorrence arises not either from any Sense of Hurt they do him, or Fear of Hurt they can do him, his Nature being wholly *impassible*, but from the repugnancy they bear to his own infallible Reason; and his Abhorrence being wholly founded in his *Reason*, and not in any Sense or Feeling he hath of the Evils he detests, must upon this Account be stript of all *Grief* and *Vexation*.

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Wherefore in attributing to God the Perfection of *Sense*, we must take care to abstract from it all those *Affections* which spring out of the *Imperfection* either of our *Nature* or our *Happiness*.

But then in the last Place, when we attribute to him the Perfections of *Reason*, viz. *Knowledge* and *Rectitude of Will*, we must also abstract from them all those Imperfections with which they are attended in the Creatures; as for instance, *Knowledge* in the Creature is attended with *Reasoning* and *Discoursing*, that is, inferring one Thing from another, arguing *Consequents* from *Principles*, and *Effects* from *Causes*, which is a great *Imperfection* of Knowledge, and a plain Indication that it is *narrow* and *confined* in itself, and not to be improved without *Labour* and *Study*. For that we are said to infer one Thing out of another is an evident Token that we know but *in part*, because in this way our Knowledge must be *successive*, and we must know one Thing *before* we can know another; we must know the *Principles* before we can know the *Consequents*, and the *Causes* before the *Effects*; else how can we *deduce* the one from the other? And this *deducing* or *inferring* requires a great deal of *Study* and *Labour*. Wherefore in attributing *Knowledge* to God, we must abstract from it this Imperfection of *Reasoning* and *Discourse*; for his Knowledge being *infinite* or *unconfined*, by the utmost *Extension* and *Duration* of Things, doth at one *Intuition* or *simple View* behold all Things *past*, and *present*, and *to come*, yea, *whenever*, *wherever*, or *howsoever* possible; and beholding, as he doth, all *Consequents* in their *Principles*, all *Effects* in their *Causes*, he doth not

know one thing after another, but comprehends them all together in his infinite Mind, without any *Succession* or *Improvement*. So that from all Eternity *past* he knew as much as he doth *now*, and as much as he *will* do to all Eternity to *come*; for his Knowledge was always *Infinite*, and what is Infinite admits not either of *more* or *less*. And then for that other Perfection of Reason which consists in *Rectitude* of *Will*, in the Creature it is *acquired*, even as that Knowledge and Wisdom is by which it is measured and regulated. For Rectitude of *Will* consisting in chusing and refusing as right Reason directs, must needs be acquired in the Creature, because that *Right Reason* is so, by which it chuses and refuses; so that there is the same Defect and Imperfection in the Rectitude of our Wills as there is in our Reason and Knowledge, that is, that it is not altogether, but acquired by degrees, and so it may be is infinitely *Successive* and *Improvable*. Wherefore in attributing to God Rectitude of Will, which, as I shewed before, consists in *Goodness*, and *Justice*, and *Truth*, we are wholly to abstract from it this Imperfection of being acquired. For it is *essential* to his Will to follow the Dictates of his Understanding and Reason, and essential to his Understanding to dictate to his Will all the Parts and Degrees of Goodness, Justice, and Truth; so that the Rectitude of his Will is *infinite* both as to the extent and degrees of it, there being no *Good*, no *Degree* of Good that an infinite Reason can propose, but what his Will doth most readily embrace, and perfectly comply with; so that the Rectitude of his Will is such as could not be acquired Part after Part, Degree after Degree,

Degree, because it is essentially Infinite; and from everlasting he was as Good, and as Just, and as Faithful as now, and to everlasting he cannot be Better, or Juster, or Faithfuller than he is, because what is essentially Infinite admits no Improvement either of Parts or Degrees. And thus you see how in all these Respects it is absolutely necessary to the framing a right Apprehension of God, that in ascribing to him the Perfections of the Creature, we abstract all those Defects and Imperfections with which they are intermixt.

IV. It is necessary that in arguing from the Perfections of the Creature to the Perfections of God, we distinguish between the State and Relations of God and Creature. For there are many Things which are Perfections in the Creature considering their State which would be Imperfections in God considering his; and so on the contrary. As for Instance, to be dependent and humble, resigned and submissive; to be *grateful* and *devout* are Perfections in the Creature, because there is a Being infinitely above them in all Degrees of all sorts of Perfection, in *Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, in *Power* and *Goodness*, in *Justice* and *Truth*; a Being to whom they owe themselves, and all the good Things they possess, and upon whom they depend for all that they are, or enjoy, or hope for; and therefore it infinitely becomes them to abase themselves before him, to trust to, and depend on him, and resign themselves to him; to supplicate him for all they want, and thank him for all they enjoy; but for God to be humble, who is infinitely Perfect above all, for God to depend, who is the upholder of all, for him to submit who is Lord over all, or

to be *Devout* and *Grateful*, who is the supreme *Fountain* and *Proprietor* of all, would be to sneak and condescend far beneath the infinite Dignity of his *Nature*. As on the contrary, to love *himself* above all, to set up *his* Will above all other Wills, and to *expect* and *require* that they should do *Honour* to it; to exact *Adoration* and *Worship* from all, and to *appropriate* it to himself *from* all other Beings, are Excellencies and Perfections in *God*, because he is infinitely amiable above all other Beings, and therefore ought in Reason to *love* himself above all, infinitely exalted above all other Beings, and therefore ought in Reason to expect that all other Beings should be *subject* to him; in a word, because *he*, and he *alone* is *God*, and hath all divine Perfections appropriated to himself, and therefore ought in Reason to expect that all *capable* Beings should acknowledge his Divinity by *suitable* Actions, and restrain their Acknowledgment of it wholly to *himself*; but for a *Creature*, that is infinitely *less* lovely than *God*, and infinitely *inferior* to him, to love itself, and set up its own Will above him, and *invade* his Throne and Divinity, and *arrogate* to itself his Honour and Worship, is not only *unreasonable*, but *impious*. In this Case therefore we must carefully distinguish between the *States* of *God* and *Creature*, and not attribute to *him* those Perfections of the Creature which are proper to it, under the Notion of *Creature*, because in doing so we shall infinitely *degrade* him; but whatsoever is in itself a Perfection, precisely considered from all Respects to the State and Relations of a Creature, that we ought to ascribe to *God* in its utmost *Extent* and *Degree*.

And

And yet even here it will in many Cases be necessary for us to keep this Distinction of *God* and *Creature* in our Minds ; for though whatsoever is absolutely and in itself a Perfection in the Creature, is also a Perfection in God ; yet considering the State of God, that may be an Exercise of absolute Perfection in him, which would be Imperfection in a *Creature*. As for Instance, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, and *Justice* are absolute Perfections in a Creature, and therefore ought to be attributed to God ; but it doth not thence follow that *that* is no Exercise of these Perfections in *God* which is not so in *Creatures*. It is an Act of Wisdom in a Creature to pursue his Ends by the most *probable* Means, but it doth not therefore follow that it is an Act of *Folly* in God to effect his Ends by contrary Means, because he being not only *All-wise*, but *All-powerful*, which no Creature is, can make the most contrary Means as subservient to his Ends as the most probable ; and therefore sometimes to display the Greatness of his *Power*, and to excite our *Attention* and *Reverence* he chuses to operate by contrary Means, and when he doth so he chuses most wisely. Again, it is an Act of *Goodness* in us to succour the Unfortunate, and rescue oppressed Innocence from undeserved Calamities ; and not to do so, when we can with *Ease*, and without any *Prejudice* to ourselves, is a high Degree of *Malice* and *Ill-nature*. But it doth not therefore follow that it is an Act of *Malice* in *God* to permit Innocence to suffer, when with *Ease*, and without the least Damage to himself he can relieve it, because being infinitely *wise* and *powerful*, which no Creature is, he can infallibly bring *Good* out of *Evil*,

and advance us to *Happiness* by *Suffering*; and therefore sometimes he permits the Innocent to suffer *Evil*, thereby to procure them some *great* and *lasting* Go d; and when he doth so it is an Act of great *Goodness* in him. Once more, it is *Justice* in the *Creature* not to *kill* or *hurt* the *Innocent*, not to *deprive* them of any *Good* they are *rightfully* possessed of, and to act contrary is great *Injustice*, because we have no *Right* to another Man's *Life*, or *Limbs*, or *Goods*, unless he *forfeits* them to us by some unjust Attempt to deprive us of ours; but it doth not therefore follow, that it would be *unjust* in God to do so, who being the supreme *Proprietor* of our *Lives*, and *Limbs*, and *Goods*, which no *Creature* is of any other *Creatures*, can justly *resume* them when he pleases, be we never so *innocent*, because they are *his own*; whatever he gave us he can *take away* from us, without any *Injury*, because he rather *lent* it than *gave* it us, reserving the absolute *Propriety* in himself; and *his* Right being *supreme*, *absolute*, and *independent*, and *ours* but *subordinate* and *conditional*, whatsoever we can justly do he can justly do, and abundantly more; so that though we may argue this or that is *just* in the *Creature*, therefore it is just in God, yet we cannot argue *è contra*, this or that is just in God, therefore it is just in the *Creature*, because *his* right in *all* Things is *infinitely* paramount to *our* right in *any* thing; and therefore though he cannot without our own *Fault* and *Forfeiture* reduce us to a *worse* State than that of *not being* wherein he found us, because to do so would be equivalent to the *taking away* from us more than he gave us, and consequently more than he hath a *right* to, yet
 God's

God's Right being infinitely more absolute and retentive than ours, he can justly take away from us infinitely more than we can justly take away from one another. And therefore to correct the Iniquities of wicked *Nations* and *Parents*, God sometimes lays his Hand upon good *Kings*, and innocent *Children*, and either deprives them of their *Comforts*, and pursues them with constant *Infelicities*, or puts an untimely Period to their *Lives*; and when he doth so, he hath an absolute Right to do it, which no other Being can *pretend* to. Wherefore in attributing to God the Perfections of the Creature we are carefully to distinguish between the *State* of *God* and *Creatures*, and neither to ascribe to him any of those Perfections which belong to a Creature, *as* a Creature, nor to *bound* the *Exercise* of those absolute Perfections we ascribe to him by the *Rules* and *Limitations* of the Creature.

V. Altho' in arguing from the Perfections of the *Creature* to the Perfections of *God*, we are not to subject him to the *Rules* of a *Creature*, yet we ought always to suppose his *Will* and *Power* to be intirely subject to the *moral* Perfections of his *own* Nature. For God who is infinitely exalted above all other Beings can be subject to no other Law but that of his own essential *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness*; and since every thing hath a Right to exercise its own Faculties so far forth as it is *just* and *lawful*, God who is subject to no other Law but only that of his own Perfections, hath an *essential* Right to *will* and *do* whatever that Law *allows* and *approves* of. Now the *Perfection* of God which gives *Law* to his *Will* and
Power,

Power, are those which, for Distinction sake, we call *moral*, because their Office is the same in him with that of *moral Virtues* in the Creature, viz. to conduct and regulate his Will and Powers of Action; and these *moral Perfections* are his *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Truth*, which being all essential to him are as much a Law to his Will and Power, as *moral Laws* are to ours: And to suppose his *Will* and *Power* not to be perfectly subject to them, is to suppose him a very defective and imperfect Being, a lawless Will and Power being the greatest Defect in Nature. Wherefore to secure our Minds against all injurious Apprehensions of God, this is a most necessary Rule, that we conceive him to be such a Being as can neither will nor act any thing but what his own essential *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, and *Justice* do approve; that in all his *Decrees*, *Purposes*, *Choices*, and *Actions* consults his *moral Perfections*, and perfectly regulates himself by them, and doth neither chuse nor refuse, elect nor reprobate, save nor damn without their full Consent and Approbation. For to affirm that he is not obliged to regulate himself by *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness*, or that he can do otherwise, is to attribute to him a Power to will and act foolishly, maliciously, and unjustly, which indeed is not so properly Power as Impotence; and to suppose that he can thus will and act, is to deny that he is infinitely Wise, and Just, and Good, which utterly excludes all Possibility of being otherwise in any Respect or Degree. For to be infinitely Wise and Just is to be infinitely removed from Folly and Injustice, which nothing can be that hath the least Degree of Possibility to act

unwisely

unwisely or unjustly. Wherefore in conceiving of God it is always to be supposed that his *Will* and *Power* are so immutably subject to the *moral* Perfections of his Nature, as that it is impossible for him to will or act against them. For all the *Liberty* of Will that is determinable to *Good* or *Evil*, *Just* or *Unjust*, is a *Flaw* and *Imperfection* in the reasonable Nature, because it speaks the Will to be defective in that which is the *utmost* Possibility of *Goodness* and *Justice*, *i. e.* in being immutably determined thereunto; and therefore to attribute such a Liberty to God, is to *scandalize* his Nature, and *reproach* it with Imperfection. For all that *Power* which is not conducted by *Justice* and *Goodness* is only Power to do Mischief, to Tyrannize over other Beings, and to sport and play with their Miseries; which is so far from being a *Perfection* of Power, that it proceeds from the most wretched *Weakness* and *Impotence*. So that by attributing such a Power to God, we foully *aspersè* and *blaspheme* him, and instead of a God imagine a *worse* Devil, and more qualified to do Mischief than any, that are now in Hell, who though they are powerful enough to do Mischief, are none of them omnipotently mischievous; it is to imagine a *God* without a *Deity*, that is, without that essential Rectitude of Will wherein all his *moral* Perfections do consist, which are the *Crown* and *Glo-ry* of his Nature. For to be good and just are the brightest Rays of the Deity, the Rays that illustrate and glorify all his other Perfections; and without which, infinite *Knowledge* and infinite *Power* would be nothing but infinite *Craft* and *Mischief*; so that to imagine that he hath any *Will* or *Power* that

that is not *essentially* subject to his *moral* Perfections, is to deface the very *Beauty* of his Nature, and represent him the most horrid Thing in the World. Wherefore in conceiving of God we ought to fix this as the main and fundamental Rule of our Thoughts, that he hath no *Will* to *abuse*, or *Power* to *act*, but what are in *perfect* Subjection to infinite *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness*; and this will secure our Minds from all those rigid and sour Apprehensions of him, which by *reflecting* on his *moral* Perfections do him the greatest *Dishonour*, and represent him the most *disadvantageously* to Mankind.

VI. And lastly, it is also necessary that in conceiving of the Perfections of God we always suppose them exactly harmonious and consistent with each other. For all Perfections of being, so far forth as they are Perfections, are consistent with each other, and like strait Lines drawn from the same Centre, run on together without *crossing* or *interfering*. For there is nothing *contrary* to Perfection but *Imperfection*, and there is no Disagreement but what arises from Contrariety. When therefore we conceive of the Perfections of God, we must so conceive of them, as that there may be no manner of Inconsistency or Disagreement between them, otherwise we must admit into our Conceptions of them something or other that is *defective* or *imperfect*. As for Instance, in God there is infinite *Wisdom*, and infinite *Justice*, infinite *Goodness*, and infinite *Mercy*; wherefore if we would conceive aright of these his glorious Perfections, we must take Care not to admit any Notion of any one of them that renders it repugnant

nant to any other, but so to conceive of them altogether as that they may mutually accord and agree with each other. For while we apprehend his Goodness to be such as that it will not accord with his Wisdom, we must either suppose his Wisdom to be *Craft*, or his Goodness to be *Folly*; and whilst we apprehend his Mercy to be such as that it will not agree with his Justice, we must either suppose his Justice to be *Cruelty*, or his Mercy to be *blind Pity* and *Fondness*; and it is certain that that Goodness cannot be a Perfection which exceeds the *Measures* of Wisdom, nor that Mercy neither which transgresses the *Bounds*, of Justice, and so on the contrary. For if either God's Goodness excludes his Wisdom, or his Wisdom his Goodness; if either his Mercy swallow up his Justice, or his Justice his Mercy, there is an apparent Repugnance and Contrariety between them, and where there is a Contrariety there must be *Imperfection* in one or the other, or both.

Wherefore if we would apprehend them altogether, as they truly are in God, that is, under the Notion of *Perfections*, we must so conceive of them as that in all Respects they may be perfectly *consistent* and *harmonious*; as that his Wisdom may not clash with his Goodness, nor his Goodness with his Wisdom; as that his Mercy may not juggle with his Justice, nor his Justice with his Mercy; that is, we must conceive him to be as *wise* as he can be with infinite Goodness, as *good* as he can be with infinite Wisdom, as *just* as he can be with infinite Mercy, and as *merciful* as he can be with infinite Justice, which is to be *wise*, and *good*, and *just*, and *merciful*, so far as it is a
Per-

Perfection to be so. For to be *wise* beyond what is good, is *Craft*; to be *good* beyond what is wise, is *Dotage*; to be *just* beyond what is merciful, is *Rigour*; to be *merciful* beyond what is just, is *Easiness*; that is, they are all *Imperfection*, so far as they are *beyond* what is *perfect*. Wherefore we ought to be very careful not to represent these his *moral* Perfections as *running-a-tilt* at one another, but to conceive of them altogether as one intire Perfection, which though like the Centre of a Circle it hath many Lines drawn from it round about, and so is looked upon sometimes as the Term of this Line, and sometimes of that, yet is but one common and undivided Term to them all; or, to speak more plainly, though it exerts itself in different Ways and Actions, and operates diversly according to the Diversities of its Objects, and accordingly admits of divers Names, such as *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, *Justice*, and *Mercy*, yet is in itself but one simple and indivisible Principle of Action, all whose Operations how diverse soever are such as perfectly accord with each other, whose Acts of Wisdom are all infinitely good, whose Acts of Goodness are all infinitely wise, whose Acts of Justice are infinitely merciful, and whose Acts of Mercy are infinitely just; so that in this, as well as in their *Extension* and *Degrees* they are all most *perfect*, viz. that they always operate with mutual *Consent*, and in perfect *Harmony*. And while we thus conceive of the divine Perfections, our Minds will be mightily secured against all those false Apprehensions of God which lead to *Superstition* and *Presumption*; for we shall so apprehend his *Wisdom* and *Justice* as not to be

superstitiously afraid, and so apprehend his *Goodness* and *Mercy* as not to be presumptuously secure; and as on the other hand his Justice will protect his Mercy from being abused by our wanton Security; so on the other hand his Goodness will protect his Wisdom from being mis-represented by our anxious Suspicion. For while we consider his Mercy thus tempered with his Justice, and his Wisdom with his Goodness, we can neither expect Impunity from the one, if we continue wicked, nor yet suspect any ill Design against us in the other, if we return from our evil Ways, and persevere in well-doing.

S E C T. II.

Of the Causes of our Mis-apprehensions of God.

I Now proceed to the last Thing I proposed, which was to assign and remove the *Causes* of Men's *Mis-apprehensions* of God; many of which are so *secret* and *obscure*, so *peculiar* to the *Frame* and *Temper* of Men's Brains, so interwoven with the infinite *Varieties* of human *Constitutions*, that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to trace them, so as to make an exact Enumeration of them all; and therefore I shall only assign the most common and visible Causes by which the Generality of Men are *misled* in their *Apprehensions* of the divine Nature, which are reducible to these six Heads:

First,

First, *Ignorance* of what is the *true* Perfection of our *own* Nature.

Secondly, Framing our Notions of God according to the Model of our own *Humour* and *Temper*.

Thirdly, Obstinate *Partiality* to our own sinful *Lusts* and *Affections*.

Fourthly, Measuring God's Nature by *particular* *Providences*.

Fifthly, taking up our Notions of God from *obscure* and *particular* Passages, and not from the *plain* and *general* Current of Scripture.

Sixthly, *Indevotion*.

I. One great Cause of our Misapprehensions of God is *Ignorance* of what is the *true* Perfection of our own Natures. For, as I shewed before, in conceiving of the Perfections of God we must take our *Rise* from those Perfections we behold in his *Creatures*, and particularly in our *own* Natures, wherein there is a *Composition* of all *created* Perfections; so that while we are ignorant of what is the true Perfection of our own Natures, our Thoughts can have no *Rule* or *Aim* whereby to judge of God's. That he hath all those Perfections in *himself*, which he hath derived to us, is the *fundamental* Maxim upon which we are to erect our Notions of him; and therefore unless we know what those Perfections are which he hath derived to us, and wherein they consist, our Mind hath no *Footing* or *Foundation* wherein to raise any certain Idea of him. For since we have no other way to conceive of his Perfections but by our own, how is it possible that while we are ignorant of our
 2 own,

own, we should ever conceive aright of his? This therefore is one great Reason why Men do so grossly misconceive of God, because they have no true Notion of their own Perfection, by which they are to form their Conceptions of his.

For whereas the true Perfection of human Nature consists in *Moral Goodness*, or an *universal* Compliance of its *Will*, *Affections*, and *Actions*, with those everlasting *Laws of Righteousness* which *right Reason* prescribes, how many are there that look upon this as a very *mean* and *carnal* Accomplishment, and place all their Perfection in Things of a quite *different* Nature, *viz.* in the *Ebbs* and *Flows* of their *sensitive* Passion, and the extraordinary *Fermentations* of their *Blood* and *Spirits*, that is to say, in unaccountable *Dejections* and *Exaltations* of Mind, in vehement Impressions of *Fancy*, and mechanical *Movements* of *Affection*, in *Raptures* and *Extacies* and *Hypochondriacal Incomes* and *Manifestations*, that have nothing of *substantial* Vertue or Piety in them, nor commonly any other Effect but to cause Men to *renounce* that Righteousness which they never had, and rely upon that which they have no *Title* to, and to sooth and tickle their Fancies, and blow them up into glorious Opinions of themselves, and *triumphant* Assurances of their being the *Darlings* and *Favourites* of God, whilst poor *Moral* Men, that make Conscience of regulating their *Affections* and *Actions* by the eternal *Laws of Righteousness*, are looked upon by them with a scornful Compassion, and placed in the lowermost Form of Sinners, at the greatest Distance from the Kingdom of God. Now when Men take such *false* Measures of their

own Perfection, how is it possible they should conceive *aright* of the Perfections of God, which they have no other way to conceive of but only by *arguing* from their *own*? Wherefore in order to the forming our Ideas of *God's* Perfections, it is necessary we should first fix the true Notion of our *own*; which is no hard Matter for us to do: For our Nature being *reasonable*, to be sure its Perfection must consist in willing, affecting and acting *reasonably*, or which is the same thing, in *governing* itself in all its *Relatiens* and *Circumstances* by those immutable *Laws* of *Goodness* which *right Reason* prescribes, and which are *exemplified* to us in the Holy Scripture; and when we have fixed in our Minds *this* Notion of our *own* Perfection, it will naturally conduct our Thoughts to *God's*, and let us see that his Perfection consists not in a *lawless* and *boundless* Will, that *decrees* without *Forefight*, *resolves* without *Reason*, and *will*s because it *will*, and then *executes* its own *blind* and *unaccountable* Purposes by dint of *irresistible* Power, without any Regard to *Right* or *Wrong*: For if we rightly understand our *own* Perfection, we cannot but discern that such a Will as this is one of the most *monstrous* Deformities in Nature, because it is the most diametrically *opposite* to the *true* Idea of our own Perfection, which while we *attentively* fix our Eyes on, we cannot but *infer* from it that the true Perfection of God consists in the *invariable* Determination of his *Will* by the all-comprehending *Reason* of his *Mind*, or in *chusing* and *refusing*, *decreeing* and *executing* upon such Reasons as best becomes a *God* to *will* and *act* on, *i. e.* upon such as are infinitely *wise*, *good*, *just*, and *merciful*. For if to will and act upon such Reasons

as *these* be the Perfection of *our* Nature, we cannot but conclude that it is the Perfection of *God's* too; but if we are *ignorant* of our own Perfection, we must necessarily think of God as *Rovers*, without any certain Aim or Rule to square and direct our Apprehensions.

II. Another Cause of our Mis-apprehension of God, is our framing our Notions of him according to the Model of our own particular *Humour* and *Temper*. For *Self-love* being the most *vehement* Affection of human Nature, and that upon which all its *other* Affections are founded, there is no one Vice to which we are more universally obnoxious than that of excessive *Fondness* and *Partiality* to ourselves, which makes us too often *dote* upon the *Deformities*, and even *idolize* the *Vices* of our own Temper. So that whether our Nature be *stern*, *sour*, and *imperious*, or *fond*, *easy* and *indulgent*, we are apt to *admire* it as a *great* Perfection, merely because it is *ours*, without *measuring* it, by those eternal *Reasons* which are the *Rules* of *Good* and *Evil*, *Perfection* and *Imperfection*; and then whatever we look upon as a Perfection in *ourselves*, we naturally attribute to *God*, who is the *Cause* and *Fountain* of all Perfection. And hence it comes to pass that Men's Minds have been always tinged with such *false* and *repugnant* Opinions of God, because they frame their Judgments of him not so much by their *Reason* as by their *Temper* and *Humour*; and so their *different* Humours being not only *unreasonable* in themselves, but *repugnant* and *contrary* to one another, produce in them not only *false* and *unreasonable*, but *contrary* and *repugnant* Opinions of God. Thus for Instance, the *Epicureans*

who were a *soft* and *voluptuous* Sect, entirely addicted to *Ease* and *Pleasure*, fancied God to be *such a one as themselves*, a Being that was wholly *sequestred* from Action, and *confined* to an extramundane Paradise, where he lived in perfect *Ease*, and was entertained with infinite *Luxuries*, without ever concerning his *Thoughts* with any thing *abroad*; for *this* they thought was the Top of all Perfection, and therefore thus they would have chosen to live had they been *Gods* themselves. Thus the *Stoicks*, who were a sort of very *morose* and *inflexible* People, copied their Notions of God from their own *Complexion*, supposing him to be an *inflexible* Being that was utterly incapable of being *moved* and *affected* by the *Reasons* of Things, but was wholly governed by a *stern* and *inexorable* Fate. And accordingly the *Scythians* and *Thracians*, the *Gauls* and *Carthaginians*, who were a People of a *bloody* and *barbarous* Nature, pictured their Gods from their own *Temper*, imagining them to be of a *blood-thirsty* Nature, that delighted to feed their hungry Nostrils with their *nidorous Reeks* and *Steams* of human *Gore*. Whereas, on the contrary, the *Platonists*, who were generally of a very *soft* and *amorous* Nature, took their Measure of God *thereby*, and so framed an Idea of him that was as *soft* and *amorous* as their own *Complexion*, composed altogether of *Loves*, and *Smiles*, and *Endearments*, without the least Intermixture of *Vengeance* and *Severity*, how *just* soever in itself, or *necessary* to the Well-government of the World. Thus as the *Ethiopians* pictured their Gods *black* because they were black themselves, so generally Men have been always prone to represent God in the Colour of their own Complexions;

Complexions; which is the Cause that they many times represent him so utterly *unlike* to *himself*, because out of an unreasonable *Partiality* to themselves they first mistake the *Deformities* of their own Natures for *Perfections*, and then *deify* them into *divine Attributes*. *Thou thoughtest*, saith God, *that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, Psalm 1. 21. that is, thou didst frame thy Conceptions of me according to the Pattern of thy own *ill Nature*, and so thoughtest *basely* and *unworthily* of me. And hence I doubt not springs most of those *Mis-apprehensions* of God, which have been received among *Christians*. For how is it possible for any Man that is not of a *fierce* and *cruel* Nature himself, to believe it consistent with the Nature of God to snatch poor Infants from their Mother's Womb, that never *actually* offended him, and hurl them into the Flames of Hell? And considering the *stern* and *inflexible* Temper of the famous Author of the *Horrible Decree*, tho' otherwise a rare and admirable Person, there is too much Reason to suspect that he transcribed his *own* Nature into his *Doctrine*, and modelled his *Divinity* by his *Temper*. And so on the contrary, who but a Man of excessive *Fondness* and *Partiality*, that *loves* beyond all *Reason*, and invincibly *doats* upon the *Deformities* of his *own* Darlings, could ever imagine it consistent with the *Wisdom* and *Holiness* of God to *chuse* his Favourites without *Reason*, and when he hath chosen them, not only to *overlook* all their *Faults*, but to hide them from his own Eyes with the *Mantle* of *another's* Righteousness, that so how ill soever they behave themselves, he may never see Cause to be displeased with them? From these and other Instances it is

evident that one great Cause of our Mis-apprehensions of God, is our measuring his Nature by our *own*. For first, our *Partiality* to ourselves makes us *magnify* our own *Faults* into *Perfections*, and then whatsoever we reckon a Perfection in *ourselves* we naturally attribute to *God*, and so many times it comes to pass that our *Notions* of God are nothing but the *Images* of ourselves, which, *Narcissus*-like, we fall in love with for no other Reason but because they *reflect* our own *sweet Likeness*. As therefore we would not *wrong* God in our own Thoughts, we must take Care not to attribute to him any thing of our *own*, but what is a *Perfection* in the Judgment of the most *impartial Reason*; and because our *Self-love* is apt to *bribe* our own *Reason* into a favourable Opinion of whatever is our *own*, we ought to admit nothing of our own into our Notion of God but what is *voted* a Perfection by the *common Reason* of *Mankind*.

III. Another Cause of our Mis-apprehensions of God is our obstinate *Partiality* to our own sinful *Lusts* and *Affections*. For while Men are *vehemently* addicted to any *sinful* Courses, the true Notion of God must needs sit very *uneasily* on their Minds, because it will be always *quarrelling* with them, *suggesting* Arguments against them, and *alarming* them with *dreadful* Thoughts and *dire* Abodings of a Vengeance to come. For there is no *true* Conception of God's *Nature* but what is pregnant with some *powerful* Argument against *Disobedience* to his *Will*; so that while we obstinately persist in Disobedience to him, our *Reason* cannot truly conceive of him without waging *War* against our *Lusts*. And while a Man is thus at *variance* with himself, and one

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End of his Soul is at *War* with the *other*, so that he cannot *gratify* his Affection without *affronting* his Reason, nor *comply* with his Reason without doing *Violence* to his Affection, he can never be at ease *within*, till either he hath forced his Affection to submit to his Reason, or his Reason to *submit* to his Affection; but while a Man's Reason hath the true Notion of God and his Perfections before it, 'twill be impossible for him to reconcile it to his sinful *Affections*, against which, whenever he *cooly* reflects, it must necessarily dictate *bitter* Invectives, and denounce *horrible* Sentences. So that if he be *obstinately* resolved to side with his sinful Affections, he must either be content patiently to endure the *Clamour* and *Fury* of his own Reason, which is one of the most *uneasy* Penances in the World, or endeavour to *corrupt* and *sophisticate* his Notions of God with such Opinions as countenance his Lusts. And this, considering the mighty Influence which Men's *Affections* have on their Reason, is no hard Matter to do; for the least *Shew* of *Probability*, backed with a *strong* Affection for an Opinion, is of greater Force with *corrupt* Minds than the clearest *Demonstration*, against it. So that if the *Opinion* be but serviceable to the Interest of a Man's *Lust*, that will engage his *Affection* on its side, and then the Opinion having once retained those *powerful* Orators in its Cause, it is secure of a very *favourable* Trial at the Tribunal of Reason, where in all Probability only *one* side of the Question will be weighed, and Judgment will be given upon hearing the Arguments *for* it, without admitting any Evidence *against* it.

Thus when Men are *hunted* and *pursued* thro' their wicked Courses by the *true* Notions of God,

it is expedient for them, if they *resolve* to go on, to take Sanctuary in *false* ones, where their *Conscience* and *Will*, their *Reason* and *Affections* may dwell *quietly* together, and they may be as wicked as they please without any *Disturbance*. And abundance of such false Notions there are *prepared* to their Hands, which Men's wicked Minds have *invented* in the Defence of their Lusts. For thus some, to *ease* their Consciences, have persuaded themselves, that God is so wholly *taken up* with his own Happiness, as that he is not *at leisure* to concern himself about *human Actions*; and under this Persuasion they sin on with full *Security* that he will never *punish* them. Others on the contrary, to *reconcile* their Lusts, persuade themselves that God is wonderfully concerned about *small* things; about *trifling* Opinions and *indifferent* Actions, and the *Rites* and *Modes*, and *Appendages* of his Worship, and under this Persuasion they hope to *atone* him for all the *Immoralities* of their Lives by the *Forms* and *Outsides* of Religion, by *uncommanded* Severities and *affected* Singularities, by *contending* for Opinions, and *stickling* for Parties, and being pragmatically *zealous* about the *Borders* and *Fringes* of Religion. Others there are that to *quiet* their *anxious* Minds persuade themselves that God, *in Christ* at least, is all *Mercy* and *Goodness*, without the least Alloy of Righteousness, *Severity*, or vindictive *Justice*; and being thus persuaded, they sin on *securely*, and under the Wing of his Mercy *affront* his Authority, without any *Disturbance*. Others again, that to *stifle* the Sense of their own *Guilt*, persuade themselves that God hath *irrevocably* determined the *everlasting* Fate of Men without any Respect to their *Doings*,
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and that those whom he *will* save he will save *irresistibly* without any Concurrence of *theirs*, whereas those whom he *will not* save he hath utterly *abandoned* to a dire *Necessity* of *perishing* for ever; from whence they conclude, that if they are of the Number of those that shall be *saved*, it is *needless* for them to endeavour *after it*, and if in the List of those that shall *perish*, it is *in vain* for them to endeavour to *prevent it*; and that therefore their wisest Course is to *sin on* and expect the *Event*. All which are only the Artifices of Wickedness to *reconcile* Men's *Consciences* to their *Lusts*, and *compromise* the *Quarrel* between *God* and their *wicked Lives*, that so they may *sin on* for the future without *Check* or *Remorse*.

Wherefore if we would form a *right* Notion of *God* in our Minds, and preserve it *pure* and *unsophisticated*, we must above all Things beware not to let our *Lusts* intermingle with our *Reasonings* about him, or to *bribe us* to *assent* to any *Opinion* concerning him. For this is an eternal Maxim, That there is nothing can be *true* of the *most holy* *God*, and gives the least *Countenance* or *Protection* to *Sin*; and therefore whenever it makes for the *Interest* of our *Lusts* to *believe* any *Opinion* of him, for that *Reason* we ought to *reject* it; for nothing can be true of *God* that is not perfectly consistent with his infinite *Holiness*, and nothing can be consistent with his infinite *Holiness* that is any way serviceable to the *Interest* of *Sin*; so that while we suffer our sinful Interests to *dictate* to us our *Opinions* of *God*, we make *Falseness* our *Oracle*, and the very *Foundation* of our *Faith* is a *Lie*.

IV. Another great Cause of our Mis-apprehensions of *God* is our measuring his Nature by *particular*

Particular Providences. The Tree is known by its Fruit is the common Rule by which Men judge of God as well as of *one another*, and it is most certain that every free Agent *is* as it *doth*, that the ordinary Course of its *Actions* is an infallible *Index* of the inward *Dispositions* and *Inclinations* of its Mind; but as for the *Actions* of God, they are not to be judged of *singly* and *apart* from one another, because they have all *one* general *Drift* and *Tendency*, and so are mutually *dependant* upon one another, and closely *linked* together even from the *first* to the *second*, and so on to the *last*, in one continued *Chain* and *Series*; so that of all those innumerable *Actions* whereof his general Providence consists, there is no one *loose* or *independent* Link, but every *one* is connected unto *all* the rest, and all the *rest* to *every* one throughout that mighty Chain. Wherefore unless we had an *entire* Prospect of the whole *Series* of God's *Actions*, and of the mutual *Respects* and *Relations* which they bear one to another, it is impossible for us, without a *divine Revelation*, to make any *certain* Judgment of *Particulars*. For tho' *this* or *that* particular *Action* or *Providence* of God, considered *separately* from all the rest, may have a very *pernicious* and *malevolent* Aspect, yet it is to be considered that no *Action* of God is what it *would* be if it were *apart* by itself, but what it *is* in *Conjunction* with all the *rest* of his *Actions*, and that *that* which by *itself* might prove very *pernicious*, may by being *contempered* with *others* of a *different* Nature become exceeding *beneficial* to the World. For so in the Heavens there are sundry Stars of a very *malignant* Aspect apart by *themselves*, which yet in *Conjunction* with other Stars of a *different* Temper do many times derive a most
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benign Influence upon us. And if Men can give no certain Judgment of any single *Act* or *Scene* of God's *Providence* without comprehending at once the whole *Dramma*, how is it possible they should take *true* Measures of his *Nature* by any *particular* Event that befalls them? For, for all they know those very Events which *singly* considered are most *noxious* to the World, may be most *beneficial* as they are *intermingled* and *contempered* with other Providences; so that while they measure God by *single* Events they will many times deduce *sour* and *rigid* Opinions of him from those very Providences which are the highest Instances of his *Benignity* and *Goodness*. Thus, for Instance, should *Joseph* have framed his Judgment of God's *Nature* by his being thrown into the *Pit*, sold into *Egypt*, and there cast into *Prison* for his *Integrity* and *Innocence*, what could he have thought of him but that he was a very *envious* and *malicious* Being, that took *Delight* in *afflicting* Innocence, and *sported* himself with the *Miseries* of his Creatures? And yet considering what *followed* upon these sad Providences, and how *these* were all of them but so many *Steps* to his *Advancement*, it is plain, that had he thought *thus*, he had thought very *injuriously*; those very Providences from which he must have inferred God's *Malice* to him, being, in *Conjunction* with what followed, most illustrious Instances of his *Goodness* towards him.

And yet how commonly do we see Men pass Judgment on God's *Nature* from such *particular* Providences? they see a world of *deplorable* Accidents, such as *Famines*, *Butcheries*, *Plagues*, and *Devastations*, in which themselves are many times involved, from whence they are ready to conclude,

clude, that certainly God would never *inflict* or *suffer* these Things if he were not of a very *froward*, *cruel*, and *implacable* Nature; whereas did they but see these *sad* Accidents as they lie *interwoven* with all the *rest* of his Providences, they would doubtless see infinite Reason to conclude the quite contrary. Sometimes again they behold Wickedness *prosper* in this World, and Virtue and Innocence *depressed* and *trampled on*, from whence they are ready to conclude, either that that which we *call* Vice and Virtue are Things *indifferent* to God, or that he is *unjust* in the Distribution of *Rewards* and *Punishments*; whereas had they an intire Comprehension of the whole *Train* and *Series* of his Providence, they would soon be convinced that even in these *cross* Distributions he doth most *equally* and most *effectually* punish the *Wicked*, and reward the *Good*, by rendering the *one's* Prosperity his *Bane*, and the *other's* Adversity his *Restorative*. Sometimes again they are *denied* those *Blessings* and *Deliverances* which they have a long while *sought* with most importunate *Cries* and *Supplications*, from whence they are ready to conclude, that God is of a *stern* and *inexorable* Nature not to be *moved* or *prevailed with* by *Prayers* and *Intreaties*; whereas could they but see through the whole Drift of his Providence, they would easily be satisfied that the Goods they *pray* for are many times *pregnant* with *Evils*, and the Evils they *deprecate* with *Goods*, which are much *greater* than *themselves*, and that *that* is the Reason why God was *deaf* to their *Intreaties*, because he could not *grant* them what they *asked* without doing them

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some great *Unkindness*, and that therefore these Denials are so far from arguing him *stern* and *inexorable*, that, on the contrary, they are signal Instances of his tender *Mercy* and *Compassion*, towards us. If therefore we would conceive aright of God, we must not take our Measures of his Nature by *particular Providences*, which many times import quite contrary to what they *seem* and *appear*, but having formed our Notions of his Nature out of those *Perfections* we behold in his *Creatures*, by *them* we are to measure all his *particular Providences*, which though they are sometimes very *dark* and *obscure*, and *seemingly* repugnant to our common Notions of him, yet because we see not the *Ends* and *Reasons* of them, we ought to conclude them *good*, because they proceed from a *good God*.

V. Another main cause of our Mis-apprehensions of God, is the taking up our Notions of him from dark, and obscure, and single Passages, and not from the plain and general Current of Scripture. There is no doubt but that whatsoever God hath revealed of himself in Scripture, is *true*, because *Truth* and *Veracity*, being a great *Perfection* in itself, must needs be included in his Nature, which is the Centre of all Perfection; but yet since there are some Things in Scripture hard to be understood in themselves, and other Things difficult to us, who are not thoroughly acquainted with the *Customs* and *Controversies* they refer to, or with the *Phrase* and *Language* of the Age they were written in, it is impossible for us many times to comprehend its Meaning by the mere *Clink* and *Sound* of its Words, without expounding

pounding its obscure Passages by its plain ones, and its particular Propositions by its general Current; and to found any *Doctrin* or *Opinion* upon obscure and particular Phrases, that seemingly contradicts the plain and general Drift, and then to expound the plain into the seeming Sense of the obscure, and the general Current into the seeming Sense of the particular Phrase, is a most egregious *Prevarication* on the holy Scripture. And yet this unreasonable Practice hath occasioned many false Apprehensions of God in Men's Minds. For there is nothing more evident than that all along through the general Current of Scripture God is represented to us as a most benevolent Being, that knows no *Bounds* of *Good-Will*, but stretches out his Arms unto all his Creation, and receives his whole Offspring, excepting only those *Prodigals* that run away from him, with *free* and *impartial* Embraces; as one that *would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*, and readily contributes to them all those *Aids* and *Assistances* that are necessary to the effecting of these *blessed* Ends; that *reprobates* none from his *Kindness* and *Favour* but only such as *despise* and *reject* it, and never *abandons* any to *Wretchedness* and *Misery* till they have first *baffled* and *defeated* all his *Arts* of *saving* them. Such is the Representation of God which the plain and general Scope of Scripture gives us; so that had Men kept themselves to this Rule of expounding *obscure* Texts by *plain* ones, and *particular* Phrases by the *general* Scope, when they *seemingly* clash one with another, they had done *right* to God, and *secured* their
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their own Minds against sundry very *wrongful* Apprehensions of him. For that God hath *destined* the *greatest* Part of Mankind to *endless* Calamity, without any *Respect* to their *Doings*; that he hath *two* Wills, *viz.* a *secret* and a *revealed* one; that his *revealed* Will is that he would have all Men to be *saved*, and his *secret* one, that he would have the *greatest* Part of them *perish*; that he hath imposed a Law upon Men which without his *irresistible* Grace they *cannot* obey, and notwithstanding he hath decreed to *with-hold* this Grace from the *greatest* Part of them, is resolved to persecute *all* that *do* not obey it with *everlasting* Flames of *Vengeance*: These, I say, are all of them such Opinions as *reflect* very *dishonourably* upon God, and have no other Foundation, but a *few particular* Phrases and *obscure* Passages in Scripture, not only *abundance* of *plain* Texts, but the *general* Drift and Scope of it being of a quite *contrary* Sense. So that had but this *necessary* Rule been observed, of interpreting *dark* Passages by *plain*, and *particular* ones by the *general* Scope, such *dishonourable* Opinions of God could never have found *shelter* under *Scripture Authority*. For I would feign know whether those Texts which declare God to be an *universal* Lover of the Souls of Men, be not far more *numerous* and *plain*, than those which *seemingly* restrain his Affection to a *small select* Number, and *reprobate* all the *rest* of Mankind; and if it be so, as I think no modest Man can deny, how can this Doctrine be deduced from Scripture, without forcing the *far greater* Number of Texts to subscribe to the *smaller*, and the *plainer* to the *obscurer*, which is

contrary to the most necessary *Rules of Interpretation*, and which, if *pursued*, will open a wide Door to the *grossest* and most *fulsome* Errors in Religion. Wherefore to secure our Minds from *false* Apprehensions of God, it is necessary that in consulting the Scripture concerning him, we should follow the *plain* and *general* Drift of it, and not entertain *any* Opinion of him upon the Credit of a *few*, or of *obscure* Texts, which *more* or *plainer* ones seemingly contradict. For it is certain, that *that* Opinion is either *false*, or of *little* Moment, that hath but *one* or *two* Texts to countenance it, and *that* very *dubious*, which hath none but *obscure* Texts to rely on; but when there are more and much plainer *against* it than *for* it, it must be *false*, or there is no *relying* upon Scripture, the Sense whereof, as to all *particular* Opinions, must be supposed to be that which the *most* and *plainest* Texts do countenance. So that he who embraces any Opinion that hath *more* and *plainer* Texts *against* it than *for* it, embraces it for its *own* sake and not for the *Scriptures*.

VI. and lastly, Another Cause of our Misapprehensions of God is the great *Dis-similitude* and *Contrariety* of our Natures to *his*. For when Men have nothing of *God* in them, nothing of those amiable *Graces* which are the *Glory* and *Lustre* of *his* Nature, it is impossible they should have any *Experience* of him, any inward *Taste* or *Relish* of his Perfections; so that they can only know him by the *Hearing of the Ear*, by *Books*, and dry *Discourse* and *Reasoning*, which compared with *experimental* Knowledge is very *uncertain* and *defective*. For between the *notional*

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and the *experimental* Knowledge of God, there is the same Difference as between the Knowledge of a *Geographer* and a *Traveller*; the *one* hath only a *faint* and *rude* Figure of *foreign* Countries in his Head, copied from the *Globe* or *Geographical* Descriptions; whereas the *other* having *travelled* through them, and *beheld* their *Situations*, and *Cities*, and *Rivers*, and *conversed* with their *People*, and *tasted* their *Fruits*, retains a *clear* and *lively* Idea of them, of the *Exactness* whereof he hath as *firm* a Certainty as of the Truth of his own *Senses*. Thus he who knows God only by *Books* and *Discourse*, can have but a *faint* and *imperfect* Idea of him; he may *believe* him to be *infinite* in all *Kinds* and *Degrees* of Perfection, in *Goodness*, and *Mercy*, and *Justice*, and *Truth*, and be able to *demonstrate* it upon dry Principles of *Reason*; but having no *Experience* of these Perfections in *himself*, no *Sense* or *Relish* of their *Beauty* and *Excellency*, his Apprehensions of them are but *slight* and *obscure*, like a *deaf* Man's Notions of *Sounds*, or a *blind* Man's of *Colours*, which for want of the Evidence of *Sense* cannot be so *clear* and *certain*, and *distinct* as theirs are who *see* and *hear*. Whereas he who *partakes* of the Perfections of God, and is in any Degree *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, hath as it were *travelled* into his very *Nature*, and *seen* all his Perfections by the *Light* of an infallible *Experience*; he knows what God is, not so much by *Reasoning* and *Discourse*, as by a *quick* and *lively* Sense of the divine Perfections, which he hath *copied* and *transcribed*

into his *own* Temper, and which, like the Beams of the Sun *light up* his Thoughts to that *Fountain* of Light from whence they were *derived*. And he who hath God's *Piçture* in his own *Breast*, and can see *his* Perfections in the *Graces* and *Virtues* of his own *Mind*, knows him by his *Sense* as well as by his *Reason*; he *sees* and *feels* God in the *God-like* Temper of his *own* Soul, the *Graces* whereof are so many *living* Images of God, and *sensible* Comments on his Nature, which render the Man's Notions of him not only as *clear* and *distinct*, but also as *certain* and *indubitable* as any Demonstration in *Geometry*. For there is no Evidence will give us so *full* a Certainty of Things as that of our own *Senses*; it was by *sensible* Evidence that our Saviour *demonstrated* himself to be the *Messias*, and *confuted* the Infidelity of his Apostle St. *Thomas*; and it is certain that our *bodily* Senses are not more *infallible* than is the *purified* Sense of our Minds. When therefore we are *transformed* into the *Likeness* of God, and made *Partakers* of *his* Nature, we shall have a *vital* Sense and Feeling of his Perfections *within* us, by which the *true* Notions of him will be more *confirmed* and *ascertained* to us than by all the *Reasons* and *Demonstrations* in the World. For *now* we shall behold the *Beauties* of God's Nature in the *God-like* Dispositions of our *own*, and beholding his *Face* in the *Glass* of our Natures, whensoever we *reflect* on it, his Perfections will be as *intimate* and *familiar* to us as the *Graces* of our *own* Minds; which will not only *awaken* our Thoughts into
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frequent Meditations of him, but also *heighten* and *improve* our Meditations into the most *glorious* Ideas of him. For, when all is done, there is no Man can *think* so *well* of God as he who hath a *God-like* Nature, because the *Resemblance* he bears to him will not only frequently *raise* up his Thoughts to God, but also *shape* them into a *Conformity* with his Nature; whereas whilst we are *unlike* to God, we are not only *devoid* of all that Evidence of his Perfections which the *purified Sense* of our Nature would give us, and consequently our Notions of him, for want of that Evidence, will be only *superficial* and *uncertain*, but through our *Partiality* to our own *ungod-like* Dispositions, we shall be apt to entertain such Notions of him as are unlike him as *ourselves*. For either out of Fondness to *ourselves* we shall look upon our *Ill-Dispositions* as *Perfections*, and so attribute them to God, or out of Fondness to *those* Ill-Dispositions we shall be tempted to admit such Opinions of God as will *licence* and *indulge* them.

Wherefore if we would secure our Minds against all *false* Apprehensions of God, we must above all Things endeavour to *purify* our Hearts from those *Evil-Dispositions* which render us *unlike* him; from *Sensuality* and *Injustice*, from *Pride* and *Discontent*, from *Envy*, *Hatred*, and all *Uncharitableness*, which are the great *Corrupters* of our Minds, the bosom *Hereticks* that *seduce* and *pervert* us, and as much as in us lies, to *conform* ourselves to the Nature of God, by practising the *contrary* Virtues; and when

once by *imitating* the Perfections of his Nature we have *transcribed* them into our own, we shall see and feel him in ourselves, and our Sense of him will *correct* our Knowledge, and our Vision of him *consummate* our Faith; and we shall be more *enlightened* in our Knowledge of him by beholding his Face in the *Sanctity* of our own Minds, than by a *thousand Volumes* of curious Speculations.

And now, having seen what the true *Causes* of all our *Mis-apprehensions* of God are, let us from henceforward *beware* of them, and, so far as in us lies, labour to *avoid* them; and considering of what *vast* Advantage to our Religion *right* and *true* Notions of God are, let us *diligently* apply ourselves to the *above-named Rules* for the *regulating* our Apprehensions concerning him; that so having thoroughly *purged* our Thoughts of all *erroneous* Opinions, we may see God *truly* as he is, arrayed in all the *genuine* Perfections of his Nature. And then we shall find our *Lives* and *Affections* under the Influence of the most *powerful* Reasons in the World. For every thing of God is *full* of *Persuasion*, all his Perfections have a *constraining* Rhetorick in them, that by a kind of *moral* Violence *conquers* all that attend to it, and *seizes* and *captivates* their *Wills* in despite of all the *Reluctances* of their *Natures*. So that when once our Minds are thoroughly instructed with the *true* Notions of God, we shall not need to seek *abroad* for *Motives* and *Arguments*, for we shall have a *Fountain* of divine Oratory within our own *Bosom*,

from whence our *Wills* and *Affections* will be continually watered with the most fruitful Inducements to *Piety* and *Virtue*; insomuch that which way soever we turn ourselves, we shall see ourselves surrounded with such invincible Reasons to trust in God and to fear him, to admire and love him, to obey and worship him, as will animate our Faculties, wing and inspire our drooping Endeavours, and carry us on with unspeakable Chearfulness and Alacrity through all the weary Stages of Religion; and we shall no longer look upon Religion as the Burthen and Oppression of our Nature, and readily embrace it as our Ornament and Crown, our Glory and Happiness, as being fully convinced that in serving of God we serve not only the greatest, but the best Master in the World.

F I N I S.

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